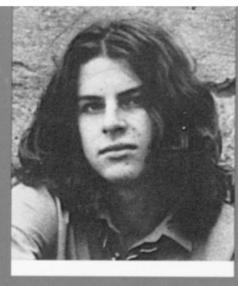
Film Quarterly



Volume 48
Number 1
Fall 1994

Martin Arnold—Sp. . . Sp. . . Spaces of Inscription

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Film Quarterly
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Sp... Sp... Spaces of Inscription: An Interview with Martin Arnold

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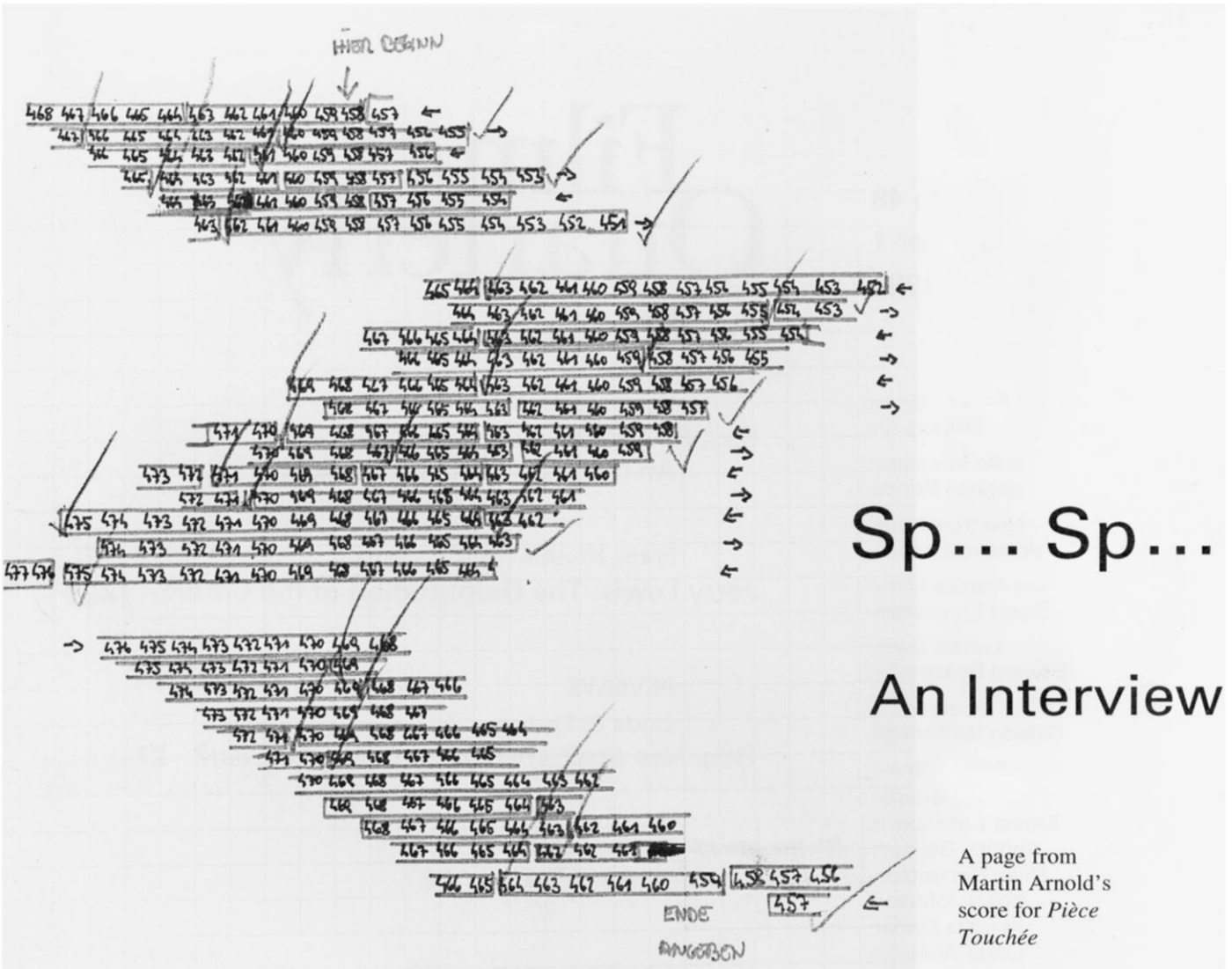


A page from Martin Arnold's score for *Pièce Touchée*

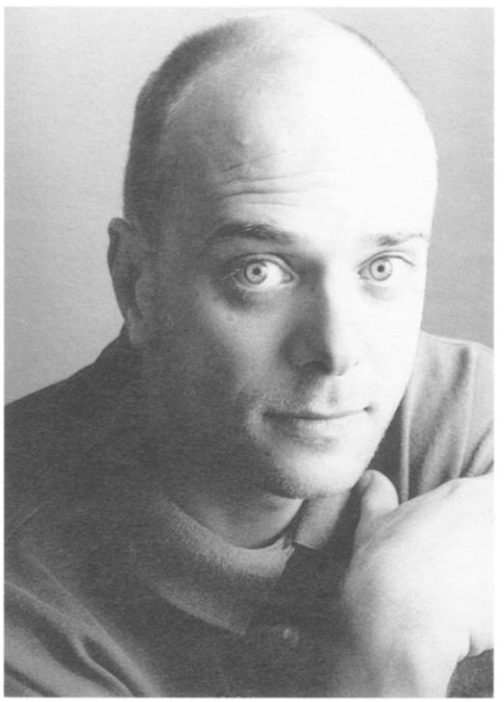
For several generations it was a commonplace of commercial film history that the development of narrative and, in particular, extended melodramatic narrative forms, by D. W. Griffith and others, transformed the makers of pre-cinema and early cinema into "primitives"—or at best "pioneers"—whose discoveries became merely means to an end. The idea that motion study (Marey's chronophotographs, Muybridge's serial photographs and Zoopraxiscope demonstrations, and the Lumière brothers' extended Cinématographic gazes on everyday and exotic sights) and magic (Méliès's "trickfilm" and its many offspring) might exist as filmic ends-in-themselves, outside of narrative development, became nearly untenable. And yet, throughout the decades that followed Griffith's emergence, motion study and magic have remained crucial elements in the history of avant-garde cinema. Indeed, for many independent film-makers of recent decades, the determination to critique industry film-making has been related to a fascination with those "primitive" approaches to cinema "left behind" as the industry developed. In the case of the young Austrian independent, Martin Arnold, "motion study" and "magic" have been central tactics for deconstructing and reframing conventional Hollywood visual and auditory gestures.

To discover an avant-garde film-maker who is able to combine theoretical and formal sophistication *and* widely accessible pleasure always seems something of a miracle. And yet it's a miracle that Arnold has accomplished twice, in *Pièce Touchée* (1989) and *Passage à l'acte* (1993), two exhilarating, often laugh-out-loud-funny short films that demonstrate that avant-garde work can be as much fun—for a good many viewers at any rate—as any other form of cinema.

Scott MacDonald

Spaces of Inscription

with Martin Arnold



Arnold's films are a noteworthy contribution to the avant-garde tradition of "recycling" material from earlier films into new works that, explicitly or implicitly, critique the original texts. Bruce Conner remains the patron saint of this tradition, though the "recycled" works most like Arnold's are the "digital/laser/videos" of Raphael Montañez Ortiz (some of whose work Arnold saw in Vienna in the mid-eighties); like Arnold, Ortiz reworks brief passages of commercial films. Arnold's particular approach to found footage film is to introduce cinematic "stutters" or "limps" into the smooth façade of the Hollywood imagery he recycles as a means of tripping up the forward thrust of conventional narrative.

For *Pièce Touchée* (15 min.) and *Passage à l'acte* (12 min.), Arnold used a homemade optical printer to analyze the visual motion in an 18-second shot from *The Human Jungle* (1954, directed by Joseph M. Newman) and the visual and auditory motion in a 33-second passage from *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962, directed by Robert Mulligan). In *Pièce Touchée* a man, apparently a husband, comes home and is greeted by a woman, apparently his waiting wife. Arnold uses his optical printer to lay bare the gender-political implications of the husband's arrival *and* to transform this gesture, which has become nearly invisible to most viewers, into a phantasmagoria of visual effects that would make any trickfilm director proud. The woman in the shot is still, passive, waiting for the man; and when he arrives, his movement causes her to move. When the door begins to open, her head begins to move in the same direction, and when his hand closes the door, her head swings the same way. It's as if she's a puppet attached to him by strings.

Passage à l'acte focuses on a domestic scene in which a father demands that his young son not leave the dinner table until his sister has finished eating. Again, Arnold lays bare the politics of a conventional

media moment, in this case transforming the original scene into a breathtaking, often hilarious mechanical ballet accompanied by a sound track that hovers somewhere between Hollis Frampton's *Critical Mass* (1971), rap, and stuttering.

A decision to interview Arnold may seem unwarranted, given the fact that he has only two films in distribution (from Canyon Cinema in San Francisco, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and Light Cone in Paris). But the visual and auditory accomplishments of these two films, the amount of thought that seems encoded within them, and their considerable usefulness for those who teach cinema studies fueled my interest in talking with him. Further, Arnold may be the most impressive new presence in an Austrian independent cinema movement that began to contribute significantly to film history in the 1950s, and already includes such remarkable film artists as Peter Kubelka, Kurt Kren, Otto Mühl, Valie Export, and Mara Mattuschka—though Arnold is an unusual presence within this history because of the broad accessibility of his work. In terms of festival awards, *Pièce Touchée* is one of the most successful Austrian films in history and *Passage à l'acte* premiered at the 1993 New York Film Festival. (Currently, a touring retrospective of Austrian independent avant-garde film is available through Steve Anker at the San Francisco Cinematheque, with a catalogue edited by Arnold and Peter Tscherkassky.)

Our interview began in the fall of 1991 with an exchange of letters; Arnold and I continued our conversation in Vienna in June, 1992; and we subsequently refined the conversation in a further exchange of letters. We are much indebted to Thomas Korschil for his assistance with translation.

SCOTT MACDONALD: *In my view,* Pièce Touchée *combines the strategies of the earliest film-makers and pre-cinematic explorers. Like Muybridge, you do a "motion study" of a social artifact; like the Lumières, you explore the possibilities of a single shot; and like Méliès, you use your apparatus to transform conventional motion into magic. But while Méliès was later incorporated into the history of conventional narrative, you transform conventional narrative back into magic. It's like a revenge on film history.*

MARTIN ARNOLD: I like the expression "revenge" in this context. When I look at the history of humankind, at my own history, and also at film history, I can think of a lot of things I would love to take revenge for. But a revenge on the history of humankind is impossible; the revenge on one's own history is called psychoanalysis; and with film history it is also difficult. As an independent film-maker, you fight in a very small army: lonely and badly armed, you compete against the star-wars systems of Warners and Metro.

How would you position your work within the history of Austrian film-making?

I grew up with Peter Kubelka's films. I started attending his lectures when I was 18. Kubelka influenced me in many ways: his frame-by-frame thinking, his structural thinking. But in his metrical films Kubelka is primarily concerned with the possibilities of specifically filmic articulations, with forms that can only be created within the medium of film. The central focus of Kubelka's thinking is what is happening between the frames. Therefore, he also tries to work against representation in the single frame: on one hand the short temporal units cause the montage of the images in the individual frames to fuse; on the other, the images themselves are already graphically abstracted.

I work with feature-film scenes, with popular cinema, so for my work the image itself is also very important: it doesn't only show certain places, actors, and actions; it also shows the dreams, hopes, and taboos of the epoch and society that created it.

How did Pièce Touchée *develop? What gave you the idea to focus on that one shot?*

A friend of mine, Walter Jaklitsch, used scenes of old movies to demonstrate a computerized projector to me. He had constructed it in such a way that it could project images at any speed from two to twenty-five frames per second. I remember looking at a scene from *The Human Jungle* that took place in the kitchen: while the *Pièce Touchée* couple is talking, the man is reaching into a drawer to get out a knife. At a projection speed of four frames per second the event was thrilling; every minimal movement was transformed into a small concussion. We were convinced that we were watching a crime story and expected him to threaten her with the knife. To our surprise though, we found out that he was not "the murderer," but the husband preparing a sandwich. I owe Walter a lot!

I already intended to work with the possibilities of optical printing. Walter sensed my excitement and

gave me the roll of film. At home I went through it with a magnifying glass and decided to start my optical printing experiments with the 18-second shot I used in *Pièce Touchée*, without even having seen it projected.

My decision to use that particular shot was very intuitive. That representation of a man and a woman and time and space was a small universe that I wanted to observe in detail. Probably I also sensed that it is especially interesting to observe those things which we (falsely) think we have seen a million times before. The husband coming home and the wife waiting for him are familiar images to everyone, especially because that scenario is used in all genres of conventional cinema. Every male Hollywood hero at some point returns home to his waiting wife—whether he has just shot a few dozen Indians or arrested illegal alcohol distillers in the Chicago of the 1930s. Beyond that, the entering and leaving of rooms is itself a central impulse in conventional narrative cinema of the 1950s. It is the simplest way to signal a change of place.

I also found formal factors that I was impressed by. When I discovered the quick pan at the end of the shot, I immediately thought of amplifying it in both the forward and backward directions, in order to destroy the calmness of the previously symmetrical composition. The structure of space in conventional narrative cinema is as much at a deadlock as the structure of gender and because of that I felt great pleasure in thoroughly shaking up that space.

At the beginning, I tried out certain forward and backward movements. Naturally most of the material produced was trash, but I repeatedly corrected and expanded the more promising passages. In that manner I was able to feel my way toward an end product. I also continued to search through the original footage for all manner of implications and possibilities. I wanted to see what the actors were doing, what the camera was doing, what the light was doing, which shadows would appear when and where, and so on.

I was never tempted to exercise any kind of conceptual art: that is, to think up an abstract system into which I would fit the images.

How long did you work on Pièce Touchée*?*

I worked on it very intensely for one and a half years. Using a self-constructed optical printer—very simple and very fragile—I photographed 148,000 single images and wrote down the sequences of the frames in a 200-page score. I learned to think movies forwards, backwards, flipped, and upside-down.

Pièce Touchée *asks that the viewer investigate a bit of film the way a scientist investigates a cell—though you're more playful than most scientists in your presentation of your "findings." But I've heard you described as a film theorist; what theorizing—by you or others—do you see as particularly relevant to* Pièce Touchée *and its exploration of gender?*

I am not a film theorist and I did not try to filmically translate any theory of gender politics. And your comparison with the scientist is only partly true. I do, I suppose, use the optical printer as a kind of microscope. But concerning the cell, the comparison is problematic: a cell is something natural, whereas a shot from a movie is an artifact; it comes from an industry which supplies people with pictures and stories that move them.

When you look at a strip of film you will at first see a regular sequence of rectangular frames that represent a three-dimensional space. Those are the tracks the camera left behind; the apparatus inscribed itself into the material. If you look more closely "into" the frame, you will see tracks of people and objects which were in front of the camera at the time of the recording. In amateur films an individual with his family inscribes himself and his family into the material; in commercial-narrative movies an industry inscribes its actors, modes of representation, and stories into the material. It is here that the tradition of representation is being written, and those cultural idols, Man and Woman, and their ideal life together are being established.

Into the original strip of film I used to make *Pièce Touchée* the society of the 1950s had inscribed some of its codes of representation and many of its social norms (above all, those concerning gender). And all this was and is apparent in a couple of frames: it is not necessary to watch the whole movie to recognize the obvious and not-so-obvious messages inscribed in it.

But I approached the material very openly: at first I was interested above all in the strong sensual effect that is created by running the film forward and backward. I had the impression that the movements on the screen were extending to the body of the spectator. During the projection of my first sketches I was repeatedly rocking my chair, as if I were attached to the figures by strings. Many people experience *Pièce Touchée* as very erotic; I've been asked again and again why it's so sexual. I think that this impression originates on a formal level, as the product of that irregular vibration.

The representation of genders adds to this and channels this instinctive mood. In the beginning I was

Pièce Touchée: Husband entering the room

forward and backward movement. An example is the "sequence of the kiss," when the woman is endlessly blinking her eyes while he is massaging the back of the chair and swinging his hips. In the original shot there is no blinking; she has her eyes closed much longer; and he just takes his hand off the chair.

The game of producing new meanings is introduced in a less lascivious way right at the beginning. We see two frames repeated over and over, showing a motionless woman in an armchair. After longer observation, one might notice that one of her fingers is rendered out of focus. As a third and fourth frame are added, the finger starts to move and the spectator is inclined to attribute a certain meaning to it. We see a "switching" or "trembling" finger, which ultimately becomes a "beating" finger. Movement enters the picture, meaning is seen.

surprised about the multiplicity of possible ways to influence meaning. This naturally led me to search the original material for those aspects of the imagery that create particular meanings. It was fascinating to see that minuscule shifts of movement could cause major shifts in meaning. But also, the sensuality and energy of a work of art always work on a level where it is not yet (or not anymore) possible to talk about "representation." Forms, colors, contrast, and rhythms don't affect the spectator in the realm of language and logic; they communicate on deeper levels. I would situate the discourse in which they take part in the unconscious.

You do more than discover what's in that shot: you transform it.

It was fascinating to see the moments in *Pièce Touchée* where certain events are created just by the

In that opening moment, the man turns the hall light off, and you work with the relevant frames until, finally, his gesture of turning off the light becomes a flicker—a reference, perhaps, to a basic element of cinema technology and to those "structural film-makers" who have explored flicker in their work. In North American and England, critics (and some film-makers) have seen a schism between film-makers—like Ernie Gehr, Tony Conrad, Paul Sharits—who explore the mechanical/chemical bases of cinema and a later generation—Yvonne Rainer, Laura Mulvey/Peter Wollen, Sally Potter—who explore the issue of gender. Pièce Touchée *combines both investigations: it's very much about the mechanics of cinema and about its gender (and other) politics.*

I go back to the term "inscription." I think that in the 1960s avant-garde film was concerned with inscription into the material, whereas in the 1980s it was

concerned with inscription into the tradition of representation.

In any case, I don't see any contradiction between the two approaches. The politics of cinema don't begin where gender roles are stereotyped (or challenged). Representing the world in linear perspective through the optics of the camera is already an ideological undertaking, in which not only the object but a certain view of this object is portrayed. The optics of the camera construct a world the way certain humans see it, a world in which they can experience themselves as its center. This is already a politics of representation.

If we go a step further and consider the dominant practice of the cinematic apparatus in society, we are again confronted with political ventures. There are ideologies for telling stories and for presenting time and space. In classical narrative cinema, the rules for representing temporal and spatial sequences are predetermined precisely. What was once called "realism" in cinema does not come by itself, it is forced into being by a multitude of prohibitions and restrictions. Of course, there are similar phenomena of exclusion on the narrative level: certain stories are told, others not.

The cinema of Hollywood is a cinema of exclusion, reduction, and denial, a cinema of repression. Consequently, we should not only consider what is shown, but also that which is not shown. There is always something behind that which is being represented which is not represented. And it is exactly that that is most interesting to consider.

In my childhood, Hollywood's love and crime stories instilled in me great expectations of adulthood. I absolutely wanted to be a part of that exciting world. When I grew up, I was tremendously disappointed. Was the disappointment caused by the fact that Hollywood's male heroes spend more time kissing and shooting than do real-life people? Was it the pleasure received from Hollywood's stories, which in contrast to those of real life always have a definite beginning, a definite end, and a definite meaning? Or, was it just the voyeuristic opportunities Hollywood gave me to intrude into the private living quarters of strangers to watch their most intimate emotions? There is no one answer to the question of what constituted the attractiveness of cinema during my childhood. But one thing is for sure: I owe to it my current use of that apparatus.

Of course, theories that film artists themselves attribute to their work are to be taken with a grain of salt. In the 1960s, some film-makers attempted to get to "the essence of film," the "ultimate elements" of the medium. This was a very ahistorical and normative view, which cannot be taken seriously anymore,

Pièce Touchée:
Welcome home

though we do owe some very good films to this kind of thinking. On one hand, it is necessary, of course, to deal with the elements of the apparatus one works with. Through this exposition one can advance its creative potentials and contribute to an understanding of the possibilities of the medium. But if one describes the film exclusively, "essentially," as a set of mechanical, physical, and chemical variables, then one curtails the object to be defined. Film *is* all of that, but a lot more too! It is also *essential* to look at what film actually is in society.

And yes, the hall-light passage *is* a joke on structural film-making. I had a lot of fun confronting the "flicker," a holy relic of avant-garde film, within the earthbound reality of a narrative movie, to send the "essential" film-thinking into a filmic living room, where obviously little essential thinking is happening.

How is the original 18-second shot situated within The Human Jungle*?*

The husband has just come home from a gangster chase. He's an inspector who is pursuing a killer. It is very late. His wife has already been waiting for hours, and in the following kitchen-shot she admonishes him to work less and to care more about her.

It is not a key scene, and the setting isn't representative, because the major part of the plot takes place at the police station and in nocturnal (studio-) Chicago. In any case, I never plan to comment on specific movies with my work. I could have taken a similar scene from a thousand other movies. The scene does not stand for *The Human Jungle* in its individuality, but for Hollywood's 1950s version of a matrimonial living room.

Why the title Pièce Touchée*? "Touchée" in English means a concession to an opponent for a point well-made.*

Literally translated, "*pièce touchée*" means "touched piece," but this French term also stands for a rule in international chess competitions. If you touch a figure, even if it is just by chance, your competitor may say, "*pièce touchée*," which means that you have to move that piece. The German equivalent is *berührt/geführt* ("touched/conducted"). I like all of the associations of this phrase, not only those connected with gender, but those connected with the mode of production: I "touched" and "conducted" my snippet of film very often (148,000 times) to make *Pièce Touchée.*

I assume the film uses the sound of the optical printer as the accompaniment to the visuals.

No, the sound in *Pièce Touchée* does not originate from an optical printer. One hears a very narrowly laid loop which reproduces the sound of the door being opened, distorted in recording. Of course, I was aware of the fact that the sound is suggestive of projectors, blimped cameras, and in the case of *Pièce Touchée*, of an optical printer.

The choice of this sound was formalist. I only started to deal with the sound after the picture had already been completed, and at first I wavered between two extremes, synch sound and silence. Synch sound turned out to be impossible, because of the very small measures of time I had used for the picture. The qualities of a sound are hardly audible at lengths of 1/24 or 1/12 of a second. At that level, every sound becomes a peeping noise and adds a childish, seemingly sarcastic tone to visual events. After the first trials with synch sound, I realized that I had to save that concept for my next project and would there have to create the sound from the beginning along with the picture. As you know, that's what I did in *Passage à l'acte.*

But to get back to *Pièce Touchée.* As a silent film, I did not like it. I believe that silence in cinema confers a certain monumentality on the events on the screen. And further, "no sound" never equals silence. At screenings of silent movies the audience produces its own sounds and thus highlights the events by blowing their noses, coughing, and moving about in their seats.

After silence had been eliminated as a possibility, I tried to work with sound loops of simple variations. In fact, I tried to construct different loops for the different parts of the film. But in the face of the very complex picture track, these loops looked like a "very ambitious try," at best.

Well, what remained was the most simple loop, a repetition of a small piece of the original sound track, but without its referential or representative character. I produced a few loops like that, listened to them along with the picture, and finally decided on the one that at least in part conveys aspects of synch sound: it's the sound of the door opening. Although the sound, with its complete simplicity, is not comparable to the picture, I believe that it conveys a kind of tension that goes along perfectly with the tension of the picture.

Have you been working on Passage à l'acte *since finishing* Pièce Touchée*?*

No. It was very hard to work for a year after *Pièce Touchée.* I did a promotional tour for that film, and mailings to festivals and festival visits.

Then I tried to work with image and sound in

Passage à l'acte: Daughter at the dining table

another scene from *The Human Jungle*, but I didn't feel comfortable with sound at that point.

Passage à l'acte *is an interesting expansion of* Pièce Touchée *in its foregrounding of synch sound. But it's also different in the sense that you use an image from a film that many more people will recognize immediately. What did you do in terms of permissions?*

Nothing. You can't get old film material in Europe as easily as you get it in the United States. I decided to use what I could get, a scene from a stolen German print of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Sometimes I am afraid there may be consequences, but I'm not making money with my films, so I can't imagine anyone will be interested. When I decided to use the scene from *The Human Jungle*, I tried to find out who had the European rights. I located a distributor who told me on the phone that he didn't have the rights anymore, but that it was completely senseless for me to waste my time: as long as no one was getting poorer or richer, who would care? But before he said that, he did ask three times if I was making advertisements.

How did you choose this particular scene from To Kill a Mockingbird*?*

I had two requirements. First, I wanted another domestic moment. Second, because I wanted to integrate the synch sound into my repetitive patterns, the scene had to have a certain density on the auditory level: to put it simply, it had to be loud and eventful.

Those points of departure soon merged in the idea of choosing a scene of a family at the dining table, where the family, home, and gender themes could pair best with my formal ambition to work with repetitions of sounds. There would be a lot of clatter and scraping at the table, the shrill voices of the kids, and the lower voices of the grown-ups who "educate," that is, repeat certain orders, to furnish the kids with a decent behavorial repertoire. At this point, it was already clear to me that in *Passage à l'acte* I would not work with a single shot only, but with a whole scene. I was interested in how my forward and backward repetitions would work on the cuts, especially with the shot/countershot patterns. Moreover, I felt challenged to coordinate the actions of a whole group of people.

However, even if you know generally what you want, and are determined to rip films off instead of buying them, the selection remains very small. I taped a lot of things from TV, and finally chose the scene from *To Kill a Mockingbird*—a scene that is not vital for the narrative structure of the original movie and which does not have anything to do with the central theme of racism. The race issue made *To Kill a Mockingbird* famous, and I would have been afraid to play around with a scene where, for example, the black

man is on trial. In any case, the scene I chose is a family scene (or it looks like a family; the woman is actually a neighbor) not different from many other family scenes where parents and children are sitting at a table eating.

It's true, as you've said, that if somebody knows *To Kill a Mockingbird*, he could associate the rest of the film to what I am doing. But that wasn't my intent. I did go through a phase during which I was uncertain about this issue, since some writers I am acquainted with brought it to my attention. When the film was finished, the same people began to talk about the "family" as a matter of fact—the visual impression of my film was evidently stronger than their "better knowledge" of the original source.

I don't know the phrase "Passage à l'acte." *What does it mean?*

In spite of evident differences, *Passage à l'acte* and *Pièce Touchée* have quite a few things in common. The two snippets are similar to each other. Both are scenes from classical Hollywood cinema which show scenes of everyday family life. And I manipulate both pieces in continuously repeated forward and backward movement. I wanted to express these common aspects with another French title.

This time, I found my title in a dictionary for psychoanalysis and psychiatry. "*Passage à l'acte*" has several levels of meaning. In common usage, it means "transition into action." In slang, it means something like "just do it." In psychoanalysis, it is a (dated) expression for impulsive actions that are not explainable within the usual system of human motivations and which are mostly auto- or hetero-aggressive, the impulsive actions of violent characters. The English term "acting out" is only partly congruent with the concept.

Except for Frampton's Critical Mass, *I don't know predecessors for your work with sound. Do you?*

I think I have been influenced not so much by American film as by contemporary American music. There was a strong tendency toward radical new interpretations in the music of the 1980s. Hip-hop is full of sampled phrases that are being repeated for longer or shorter durations. Often, turntables are used to move records forward and backward. Such techniques are also used in more complex forms of contemporary American music—John Zorn, for example. Christian Marclay cuts up old records and puts the parts together in new ways. He also employs obstacles which make the needle jump forward and backward.

I myself began to put together a tape of "scratched dreams" two months ago. A friend of mine let me use her teenage record collection. Back then she had listened to her favorite passages over and over again, lifting the needle and putting it back within the same song. In doing so she had scratched those passages so severely that now the needle gets stuck, endlessly repeating certain grooves: "Dreamlo-lo-lo-lo-ver where are you-u-u-u. . . ." Thus the psyche of a young girl has engraved its desires into the record—now a great document situated somewhere between the unconscious of a single person and popular culture. This is a good example for how an individual can inscribe herself into popular culture and shift its messages toward collapse.

You discover many sounds one would normally not hear, and you discover what new sounds you can build out of those. What was the process?

For *Passage à l'acte* I transferred the sound from the 16mm print of the scene onto magnetic film, to separate it from the picture. That way it was possible to discern on the editing table what was happening at which frame of the picture and of the sound track, and how long the different picture and sound events were.

On the level of the sound track, my manipulations lead to a strong "equalization" of simple sounds and language. Through the continuous repetitions, the background sounds appear to be much louder than in the original narrative structure; the mechanism of selection which normally favors perception of language seems to be disengaged. Noise and language become sound events of equal value and importance. However, this is not only due only to repetition, but also to the fact that the forward and backward manipulations not only undermine parts of the structure of language but make a previously unstructured sequence of noises appear to be structures. Since the noises follow a certain order, language loses its sovereignty, its special status, which it gains exactly because its sequence of sounds *is* structured.

Moreover, the phrases heard in *Passage à l'acte* are such clichés that nothing personal is being expressed. Who is it that's talking? Society's norm speaks through language and language speaks itself, and apart from that, nobody speaks! In the film, we don't experience people determining the conversation, but the conversation determining the people. This is the same way in life: we did not invent language ourselves. Through the acquisition of language, our entrance into symbolic order and thus into societal order is accomplished. And there is no escape from

language (and society) except for becoming mad. This holds true for us as well as for the protagonists of *Passage à l'acte*, though they are evidently treated worse: they are not only victims of the order of family, society, and language, they are *also* victims of the order of Hollywood cinema, and in my hands, of independent cinema as well.

What draws you to the optical printer?

In a certain sense the optical printer is an apparatus that works against the camera. The camera produces images in quick sequence in order to reproduce movement. With the optical printer one proceeds from the single image, from the "brick" of the reproduction of movement, to a novel movement. The decisive question here though is, what kind of movement is being produced?

In *Pièce Touchée* and *Passage à l'acte* I work with a more-or-less continuous forward and backward motion. I start with frame x, go forward to frame x + 1, and then from x + 1 back again through x to x - 1. In *Pièce Touchée* I don't skip any frame. In *Passage à l'acte*, I do skip frames (every second frame within the backward movement), but in such a way that the forward and backward motion remains intact. If I had chosen a different process, there might have been jumps in the motion. Both methods would be based on the apparatus of the optical printer and would lead to a restructuring of the original material. However, the filmic products would be very different. With the second procedure, I would break up the film strip and thus visualize, primarily, one of the technical possibilities of the optical printer. The actual movements of the actors would drift into the background, disappear behind the demonstration of the machine, since the abrupt movements of a machine have only a slight equivalent in human motion.

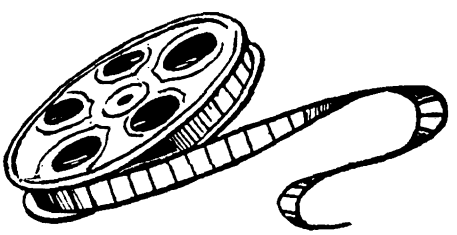
But with the first procedure—my method in *Pièce Touchée* and *Passage à l'acte*—there *is* an equivalent. We are familiar with stepping forward and backward in life: Taking "two steps forward and one step back" is associated with insecurity. When a body trembles, we perceive anxiety or nervousness. My filmic interventions infuse the characters' actions with tic-like twitchings that once in a while become so dominant as to seemingly create new actions out of themselves. The same holds true for *Passage à l'acte*, with respect to sound. If you play a word backwards, then the tape player as a machine will become audible. But if I play a word forward repeatedly, varying where I start, then something happens that we know from life. The repetition of words and sentences confers an "insisting character" on them; one can associate them with litanies and orders. The repetition of syllables produces the impression of stuttering.

I am fascinated by the world of tics and stuttering. My apparatus produces movement through breaks, and thus has a "tic" itself. I reinforce that tic by letting the apparatus run forward and backward. It lets me enter into these different worlds and take viewers and listeners with me.

Psychoanalysis suggests that in the case of a tic, the movement that is actually acted out is superimposed over an opposite or at least different movement, which had to be repressed as a consequence of censored wishes, ambivalences, and aggressive urges, which in their turn, though stunted to a rudiment, vainly try to overcome the manifest action. Something similar is true for the phenomenon of stuttering: a message that is in conflict with what actually is being said wants to be expressed.

To put it in general terms: in the symptom, the repressed declares itself. Hollywood cinema is, as I have already said, a cinema of exclusion, denial, and repression. I inscribed a symptom into it, which brings some of the aspects of repression onto the surface, or, to say it in more modest words, which gives an idea of how, behind the intact world being represented, another not-at-all intact world is lurking. Maybe this is my revenge on film history.

■ Scott MacDonald's *Screen Writings: Texts and Scripts from Independent Films* is available from the University of California Press; *A Critical Cinema 3: Interviews With Independent Filmmakers* is in preparation.



Frank Krutnik

Jerry Lewis

The Deformation of the Comic

> There's not much in this world left to horrify [William] Burroughs, but being told that he, [David] Cronenberg, and Jerry Lewis have each been elected members of the French Order of Arts and Letters is nearly enough to send him on another heroin jag. "We need to vote him out, then," shouts Burroughs.[1]

This comment, made during the publicity junket undertaken by Burroughs and Cronenberg to publicise the film of *Naked Lunch*, says much about the peculiar reputation of Jerry Lewis. Burroughs deems it appropriate that the French Order of Arts and Letters should include a wife-murdering ex-addict novelist and a maker of visceral horrorfests, but Lewis—comedian, film-maker, and Telethon-host—cannot be tolerated within such exalted company. Rarely has a public media figure been so deeply loved, and so intensively and so easily vilified. If art is in the eye of the beholder, what is that art that can frame the fearful dissymmetries of Jerry Lewis—his "spastic" physical contortions, his pretensions to godhead? The extremism that marks Lewis's public reputation—as man or myth, genius or embarrassment—began in the 1960s, when, following hot on the heels of the heretical *politique des auteurs*, French film critics launched their most devastating broadside yet against the fortress of traditional evaluative criteria. In 1967, for example, Jean-Luc Godard had the nerve to proclaim that "Jerry Lewis . . . [is] the only one in Hollywood doing something different, the only one who isn't falling in with the established categories, the norms, the principles. . . . Lewis is the only one today who's making courageous films. And I think he's perfectly well aware of it. He's been able to do it because of his personal genius."[2]

Like many other French film critics of the 1960s, Godard was perfectly well aware of the "scandal" of celebrating Lewis's "personal genius." Faced with such heady European validation of the comedian-director, even Andrew Sarris, the most ardent American auteurist, felt obliged to restore some "sanity" to the proceedings. In his 1968 book *The American Cinema*, Sarris fired off a 12-pronged salvo against Lewis's value-as-an-artist, and against the French critics' fundamental error of taste and judgement.[3] But Lewis had himself fanned the flames of the controversy by canonizing himself as a "total film-maker" and declaring that:

> When you make a film yourself, write it, produce it, direct it, perhaps star in it; a piece of your heart enters the emulsion. It stays there the rest of your life, good film or bad. . . . [A]s a total film-maker, I'm convinced that there is a greater chance of inconsistency when the four separate minds of writer, producer, director and actor collaborate.[4]

Lewisian multiplicity: *The Family Jewels* (1965)

Jerry Lewis (left) with Dean Martin in the Disney Channel special "Birth of a Team"

In his earlier, phenomenally successful cabaret, film, and TV work with Dean Martin, Lewis had developed a particularly extreme version of the comic misfit, described by its creator as "The Idiot" or "The Kid." The early Lewis-figure was a glaring inversion of acceptable standards governing the body, maturity, and masculinity, and the grotesquery of Lewis's onscreen performance could not comfortably be accommodated within established paradigms of aesthetic value. Lewis's perfomance style transforms his body into a battleground upon which a range of competing "aberrances" assault the protocols of 1950s American masculinity. The deviances of the Lewis-figure—his verbal and physical uncoordination, sexual confusion, and fragmented or uncentered sense of self—amount to a hysterical "voicing" of dysfunctional masculinity. But Lewis's excesses are measured against Dean Martin's idealized and self-assured masculine presence.

Playing the straight "handsome man" to the disordered antics of Lewis's "monkey," Martin was essential to the dynamic of the team's performance; he served as a pretext, a balance, a *cover* for Lewis's extremism. When the team split after a ten-year partnership, the contextualizing function of Dean Martin as register for and container of the Lewis-figure's aberrance was gradually appropriated by Lewis himself. Through the early 1950s, the comedian demanded an increasing say in the production of the Martin-Lewis film vehicles, but the most telling proof of his ambitions came in 1960, with *The Bellboy*—the first of 11 films Lewis starred in, directed, and often co-wrote. Whereas the onscreen Lewis-figure lacked coordination and control—in even greater measure than before—the post-Martin, behind-the scenes Lewis was an accomplished and ambitious achiever. This paradox irked Lewis critics no end.

Lewis's self-directed films not only subject his familiar comic persona to some highly accented transmutations but they also display an idiosyncratic cinematic and narrative style that marked a significant departure both from Lewis's earlier work and from the generic norms of the comedian-comedy. In their cultivation of a personal style and a personal voice, the self-directed films reveal a self-conscious auteurist project. They assert the victory of the Creative Presence "Jerry Lewis" over the regimentation of the Hollywood "entertainment machine," and in the process they also open up a multifaceted discourse of their subject.

Deformation and the Creative Presence

With the widening gulf between the spasticity of the Idiot-Kid and Lewis's flamboyant aspirations, Lewis was attacked by established reviewers for his "betrayal" of comic innocence—especially for films like *The Errand Boy* (1961) and *The Patsy* (1964), which addressed the processes of stardom and comedy and the values of entertainment. In 1978, Leonard Maltin echoed the sentiments of the 1960s American reviewers when he berated Lewis for overextending himself:

> Then Jerry Lewis decided that he wanted to write and direct his own films, to become "the total film maker." The difference in his films was obvious: they were ponderous where once they had been light and airy, pretentious where once they had been so unassuming. Although Lewis was concerned with his characterization, he no longer supported it with a strong story line, preferring black-out gags instead. Worst of all, especially to a young and nonanalytical viewer, his films were simply not as funny as those that others had written and directed for him.[5]

In such accounts, Lewis is persistently castigated for self-indulgence, for his refusal to be "simply funny." Moreover, his aspirations to totalizing authorship are attributed to an ego run riot. "There was no longer anyone to veto an idea," Maltin accuses, "so Jerry indulged his every whim, allowed Jerry the comedian to milk gags far beyond endurance, and discarded conventional notions of good taste, modesty, continuity, and —oddly enough—humor."[6]

American critics like Maltin seem affronted by the way that the self-directed films upset the *balance* between creative individualism and conformity that normally exists in the comedian-comedy.[7] By disrupting structural conventions of continuity and humor, and by offending standards of tasteful self-effacement, Lewis could no longer be so easily contained within the acceptable province of the comedian-as-jester. But the "problem" with Lewis pre-exists his directorial work: in many ways the extremism of his auteurist films is an extension of the excesses of his performance style. In a review of the comedian's first screen appearance in the 1949 film *My Friend Irma*, Bosley Crowther wrote that:

> The swift eccentricity of his movements, the harrowing features of his face and the squeak of his vocal protestations, which are many and varied, have flair. *His idiocy constitutes a burlesque of an idiot*, which is something else again.[8] [italics added]

Crowther identifies here a key feature of Lewis's style: the complex relations he establishes with both the conventional figure of the comic misfit and the conventions of comic performance. "Idiocy" is "burlesqued," it is not presented directly or innocently; and Lewis is perceived to be moving beyond the basic requirements of the comic spectacle.

Lewis amplified such comic hyperbole in his later work as a performer—as is highlighted by the *Newsweek* review of *The Geisha Boy* in 1958, where Lewis's performance meets the same kind of criticism that later greeted his directorial work:

> As in all Lewis movies, the trouble with this one is that its star seems not to know where to stop. Instead of building a bit of funny dialogue to a climax and then leaving it there to simmer, too often he messily lets the pot boil over. He does not allow himself a simple, artful double take; he has to make it a triple or even quadruple take.[9]

Underlying this complaint is the idea that comic effectiveness depends upon *restraint*. Lewis quite clearly commits gross offenses against the desired decorum of comic delivery—his performance ensures that gags and comic reactions are far from clean, precise, and contained.

Restraint and precisioned delivery play a crucial role in enabling the spectator to escape from potentially disconcerting ramifications of the comic spectacle. In an integrated film narrative, gags operate as moments of potential *rupture*. They halt, and throw into comparative disarray, procedures of logic, communication, and bodily function. But the rupturous effect tends to be trammeled: like narrative in general, gags have their own familiar conventions of ordering—of elaboration and containment. What is important to the process of the gag is not the disruptive event

in itself, but how it is made over as a *controlled* and *contained* moment of "disorder"—so it can "cleanly" generate laughter. But if the film lingers upon the victim of the pratfall and his or her injuries, then pain or embarrassment can intrude. The gag allows potentially serious events to be transformed through disavowal—it simultaneously displays yet pulls away from the serious consequences of the action. But if the *balance* is upset, and the "machinery" of comic disavowal is thrown out of alignment, then the carefully hidden "other face" of the gag may be revealed. This is always a possibility in forms of "low comedy" like slapstick, in which the human body is the prime channel for comic disruption.

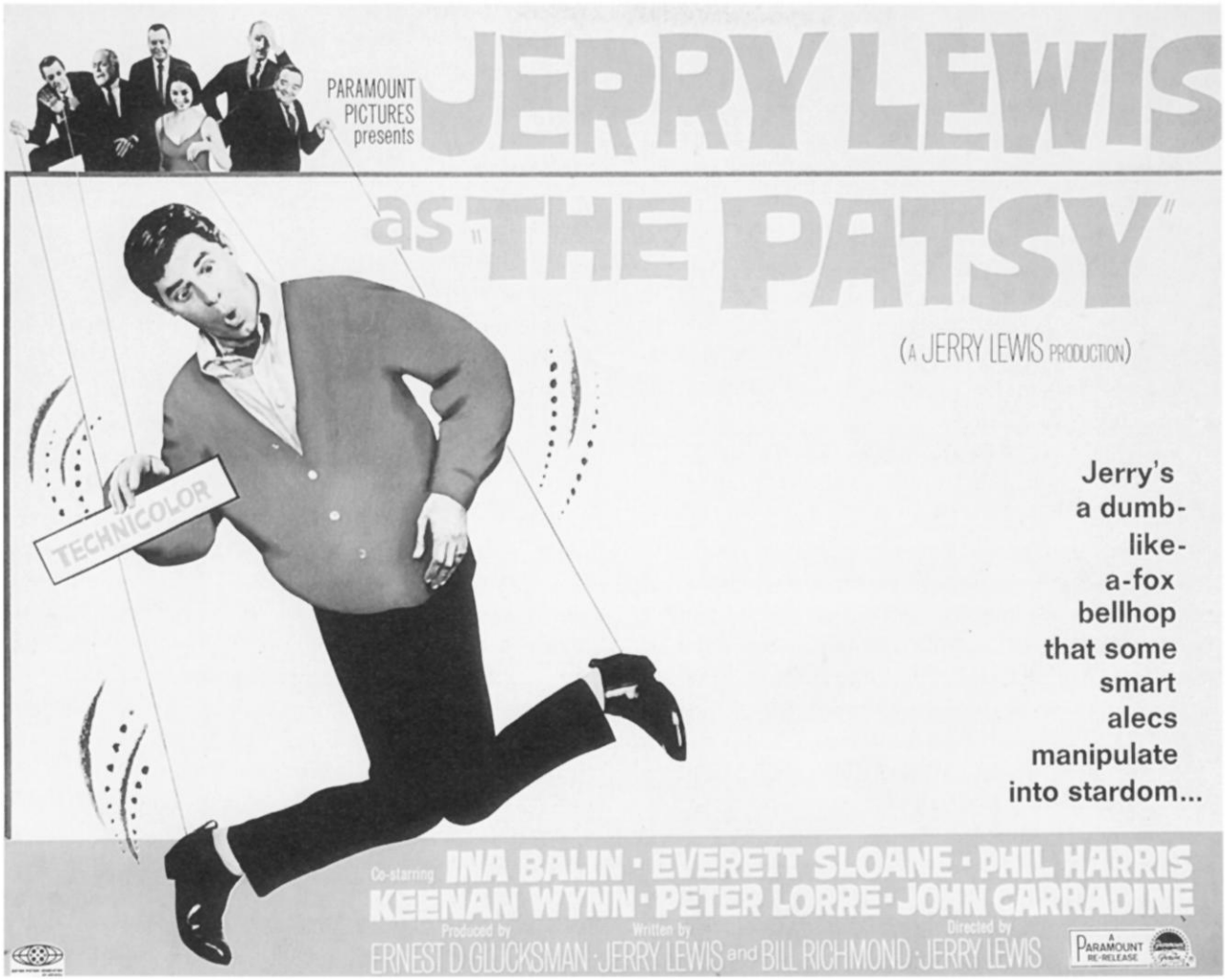
Lewis's performance articulates a particularly contorted and unruly language-of-the-body. This becomes clear when he's compared with Harpo Marx, another comedian whose body is a vital expressive tool. In the 1933 Marx Brothers film *Duck Soup,* there's a scene where Harpo is quizzed by Groucho; when asked where he lives, Harpo opens his shirt to reveal a picture of a dog-kennel tattooed on his chest. As Groucho looks at it, a "real" dog's head comes out of the kennel and barks. This characteristic Harpo Marx gag illustrates his liberation from the real-life constraints bearing upon the human body. Rejecting the regime of conventional speech, the Harpo-figure communicates his presence through the signifying surface of his body—by actively exhibiting the picture of the kennel and "knowing" that, against the dictates of possibility, the dog lies within. Harpo takes a childlike delight in shocking with the magical body, over which he has the power of a *metteur-en-scène.*

The extent to which Lewis's performance constructs a far different relationship between subject and body can be gauged from a scene in the 1951 Martin-Lewis vehicle *Sailor Beware.* As in the other Martin-Lewis service-comedies, *At War with the Army* (1950) and *Jumping Jacks* (1952), many of this film's comic sequences are generated by the conflict between the Lewis-figure's unruly body and the masculine regimentation required by the military. Seeking to enlist in the Navy, Lewis's hypochondriac weakling, Melvyn Jones, has to provide a blood sample for a medical test. Although he's already donated a pint to the blood bank, the Navy medics insist on taking their own share. But when they shove a syringe into Melvyn's arm, they draw *water* from it. The medics repeatedly puncture his body with their needles, with the same result. The sequence ends with two gags: Melvyn drinks a glass of water after his ordeal, and the liquid spurts out through the holes in his arms; and then a sailor carrying a power drill walks into the room, and Melvyn faints dead away. Where the first gag reemphasizes the deformation of Melvyn's body, the second plays on a problematic relationship between self and body (with Melvyn believing, "seriously," that the drill may be used on him). Where Harpo's controlling performance of his magical body surprises and overpowers his audience (Groucho), the characteristic Lewis-gag makes it plain that the Lewis-figure lacks any such control over his bodily deformations.

This is taken to extremes in the self-directed films, where, as a performer, Lewis's reactions are often so overextended that they outstrip the motivating context of the gag. These films are especially interesting for the way that Lewis's bodily and linguistic deformations are accompanied by a pervasive deformation of familiar principles of gag structure and articulation. As director-performer, Lewis repeatedly diverts the gag from its ostensibly-signalled direction: many of his gags refuse to build to conclusions—they frequently lack a conventional pay-off climax or finish with an expressly weak one. Jean-Pierre Coursodon suggests that Lewis specializes in the "eluded" or "eliminated" gag, the gag that provides, instead of the expected mechanism of disruption and reordering, a process of deformation through which, paradoxically, the "gagness" of the gag is itself frustrated, dissipated, or gagged.[10]

While American critics like Leonard Maltin tend to regard Lewis as *failing* to provide the conventional pleasure in gag-comedy, Coursodon implies that Lewis's comedy operates as a "second order" process of "gagging." The raw material of many Lewisian gags consists of already familiar gags, or of recognizable gag-situations. They are, in essence, "meta-gags." Where comic play is *generally* set in motion by the disruption of rules, procedures, and discursive registers—if only to reinstate them—Lewis's films themselves play with the conventional forms and procedures of comic play. As Coursodon remarks, "... these fascinating films are not always very funny. but their originality lies precisely in the fact that, while nominally slapstick routines, they so transcend categories that laughter in their case ceases to be the test of success or failure."[11]

The process of gag-deformation finds its most symptomatic articulation when, as comic performer, Lewis himself serves as its vehicle. A characteristic example occurs near the beginning of *The Patsy.* The entourage of recently deceased comedian Wally Brandford hit upon the idea of training "some nobody" to take his place. The Lewis-figure, bellboy



Stanley Belt, bursts into their hotel room bearing a tray of drinks. Under intensive scrutiny from the Brandford group, Stanley is seized by a fit of stuttering inarticulacy: "The bellboy . . . I . . . um . . . er - er. The - we - ye - say. Who? Ahm. I mean . . . see, when I - er . . . I had it-m-all my clothes . . . were *wet*. So I changed my clothes because when I . . . I that's why I was *long*. Should I pu-pu . . . or not? Just stand? I'll close the door. I'll . . . I'll - er." Squirming with the pain of embarrassment, Stanley then drops the tray and crouches down to clear up the mess. The ostensible point is that the incompetent Stanley is the inverse of the slick Wally Brandford. But this is established as soon as he appears. The sequence stretches so far beyond this that it ceases to operate as a polished gag structure. It produces, instead, a *fixation* upon the spectacle of maladjustment presented through Stanley Belt.

Such moments of elaborated embarrassment are common in Lewis's films. They pinpoint his difference from a well-oiled gag-comedian like Bob Hope, whose verbal resilience is the ammunition which allows him to master whatever misfortune his character suffers. Hope's controlled wisecracks serve to wrap up and seal off the threat to the ego, but when the Lewis-figure is faced with an intimidating situation he offers not verbal mastery but linguistic *breakdown*. Stuttering, stammering, physically contorting, Lewis's misfits lose control over both body and language. Whereas Hope's characters can overcome the threatening situation quickly and efficiently, the Lewis-figure seems *branded* by it. In his performance, the mouth becomes disconnected from the mind—in order to turn the speech act into an expressive vehicle for the unruly body. And this is made all the more excruciating for the spectator when, as in *The Patsy*, the situation is not inherently threatening. This kind of deforming strategy permits the film to make an exhibition of the Lewis-figure's inability to deal at all adequately with the external world.

The extent to which Lewis's self-directed work applies to the "body" of the film the "performing" techniques he developed for his corporeal, performative body is highlighted by Scott Bukatman. Bukatman observes that these films foreground *structural* "inarticulacy"—in the form of hesitancy, fragmentation, and obsessive repetition:

> [T]he carefully delineated narrative situations and conflicts which constitute the logic of the syntagmatic chain inevitably fall victim to a degeneration into a series of isolated sketches unrelated to the main narrative. The discursive operations of these films are dominated by digression and repetition, rather than by causal logic and narrative closure.[12]

Just as Lewis's gags and performative routines slide away from their signalled and anticipated trajectory, the self-directed films persistently deform conventions of narrative structure. The insistence of such structural deformations—of narrative, of the gag, of the body, of language—may invite the temptation to enthrone Lewis as some kind of (post)modernist *roi du crazy*. But the motivation behind Lewis's drive to assert himself as "total film-maker" merits closer attention.

Once more, the opening sequence of *The Patsy* provides a useful starting point. After Stanley makes a spectacle of himself in the doorway, he is approached by Brandford's staff. He backs away as they advance, spluttering and squirming, until he finds himself against an open window—and falls out. When his "persecutors" begin to peer out of the window, the film cuts to a view of the hotel's exterior. Stanley, facing the camera, starts to descend through the center of the image. But this is a still-photographic image of Stanley—his figure is frozen in movement, suspended in mid-air. This still-image is then pushed over to one side by the appearance of large blue letters announcing the name "Jerry Lewis"—the beginning of the film's credits. Stanley Belt, the fictional Lewis-figure, is halted in his descent by the intrusion, from outside the diegesis, of the name of the Creative Presence, the name of the performer turned Author.

The ending of the film rhymes with this sequence. After a triumphant appearance on "The Ed Sullivan Show" boosts Stanley to immediate stardom, he makes a brash proposal of marriage to Ellen Betts (Ina Balin) in his hotel room. Ellen then advances towards him, and Stanley retreats from her nervously, backing out onto the patio. He reaches the balcony wall—and topples over it. Hands covering her face in sorrow, Ellen turns around to face the camera. But Lewis then reenters from the side. He addresses Ina Balin by her real name, rather than "Ellen," and announces that they're standing on a studio set, and not a "real" hotel patio. Lewis steps out of the fictional guise of Stanley Belt to present himself as "Jerry Lewis," director—and he commands the film crew to break for lunch.

The Patsy first presents the ascendancy of the Lewis-figure as a comic performer, and then moves rapidly beyond this—to provide Lewis's apotheosis to a more elevated status. Out of the "death" of Stanley Belt—the conventional Lewis-misfit turned showbiz success—comes the "birth" of the "total film-maker." The end of this film provides a telling gesture—when, as *Jerry Lewis*, Lewis orders the end of *The Patsy*, he signals that the film obeys *his* dictates rather than those of Hollywood convention. A self-willed metaphor for Lewis's career, this film presents Lewis's advertisement-for-himself as a totalizing presence who exceeds both his familiar space as star-comedian and the "entertainment machinery" of Hollywood. *The Patsy* demonstrates how Lewis's deformations of structure, performance, and comedy are motivated by the desire to assert and to validate his own differentiated space within the Hollywood system, and to flaunt his newfound enunciative power. But this amounts to more than a simple case of self-promotion, for the auteurist films produce a series of contradictory representations of "Jerry Lewis." Although Michael Stern sees Lewis seeking within these films to come to terms with "the conflicting concepts of Jerry the ordinary guy—or extraordinary genius,"[13] the Lewis-problem exceeds such a simple dualism. Coinciding with their fervent self-promotion, the self-directed films open up a complex series of schisms within the subjective and discursive presence "Jerry Lewis."

By contrast, the solo films Lewis made with Frank Tashlin[14] in this period—*Rockabye Baby* (1958), *The Geisha Boy* (1958), *Cinderfella* (1960), *It's Only Money* (1962), *Who's Minding the Store?* (1963), and the *Disorderly Orderly* (1964)—invest in an Oedipal narrative paradigm. Although subjected to parodic treatment, this nonetheless serves as a means of defining and localizing the deviance of the Lewis-figure. The Tashlin comedies operate, that is, within the familiar dialectical process that marks classical, formalized Hollywood comedian-comedy—the conflict between the comic performer and an ordered narrative process which has as its goal the consolidation of normative masculine identity and sexuality.[15] The

Tashlin-Lewis films show, as Michael Stern puts it, a "linear and socially-oriented approach," where the Lewis-figure is cast as an "innocent" in order to satirize the "plastic culture" of the U.S.[16] The films directed by Lewis, however, reveal a more complex investment in the Lewis-figure.

The narrative dislocations of the self-directed films persistently free or divert the Lewis-figures from the conventional pathway of social and sexual identity. These films are especially fascinating—or, to some tastes, infuriating—for the degree to which Lewis defines himself not by means of the conventional cultural machinery of Oedipal narrative but in relation to different facets of "Jerry Lewis"—as famous star, as comedian, as enunciator. He flamboyantly hijacks the Hollywood comedian-film and reroutes it in the process, transforming it into an insistently nontraditional vehicle for "self-expression," for the construction and presentation of a discourse of the self. Although—as *The Patsy* shows—the concept of control is crucial to this discourse, the films themselves offer a more radical splitting of Lewis—not simply into performer and auteur, but into multiple personae.

At the same time that Lewis increased the roles he performed *behind* the camera he began, to an obsessive degree, to multiply himself *within* the films.[17] He plays dual roles in *The Bellboy*, *The Ladies' Man* (1961), *The Errand Boy* (1961), and *The Nutty Professor* (1963). *The Patsy*, besides offering both Stanley Belt and Lewis-the-director, also features Lewis's impersonation of a female singing trio. He plays a total of seven parts in *The Family Jewels* (1965), five in *Three on a Couch* (1966), and three in *The Big Mouth* (1967). The more evident Lewis's totalizing presence as auteur, the more this presence is subjected not only to a noticeable multiplication but also to insistent fragmentation. And this process mushroomed beyond the films themselves; various media forms of the 1960s witnessed a proliferation of Lewisian personae:

(a) the Idiot-Kid, the familiar Lewis-figure;

(b) Las Vegas Jerry, the slick showbiz professional, increasingly evident in nightclubs and on television (as in Lewis's work as guest-host for NBC's "Tonight" show in 1962 and his own live ABC show in 1963);

(c) Jerry Lewis, Hollywood director, another "successful" persona;

(d) Telethon Jerry, the persona that ascended with the decline of Lewis's film career, but prefigured in the sentimental didacticisms of films like *The Errand Boy* and *The Nutty Professor.*

In the self-directed films, these personae jostle against one another. In *The Nutty Professor*, for example, the Lewisian misfit Julius Kelp transforms

Julius Kelp, the nutty professor

himself into his desired alter ego, cool and handsome nightclub entertainer Buddy Love. Love evokes Dean Martin's presence in Lewis's earlier films, but he has even greater resonance. The manipulative and self-obsessed Buddy Love is also a monstrous incarnation of "Las Vegas Jerry"[18]—implying that Lewis has "consumed" his former partner! *The Nutty Professor* explicitly pinpoints how Lewis's self-directed work is engaged in a process of rewriting its subject's "history." It is *The Patsy*, however, that provides Lewis's most sustained and polemical discourse on his "art" and career.

A Big Night in Hollywood

Like *The Errand Boy*, which is set in a Hollywood studio, *The Patsy* propagandizes for entertainment that comes from the heart—more specifically, from Lewis's heart. The uncoordinated misfit Stanley Belt is taken in hand by Brandford's executive committee, who seek remorselessly to shape him into an all-round entertainer, a showbiz machine. Out of the unpromising raw material presented by Stanley, the Brandford team seek to manufacture a star who is a puppet to their collective dictates. In their view, individual talent can be shaped, and even created. Just as *The Nutty Professor* uses the familiar narrative framework of the Jekyll and Hyde story, *The Patsy* invokes the Frankenstein myth.[19] In this case, though, the role of the overachiever is taken by a committee that is well versed in the business of stardom. At the start of their corporate adventure, Chic Wyman (Everett Sloane), the leader of Brandford's retinue, declares that "This kid can and will be whatever we want him to be." What they demand is "some nobody," a will-less automaton who can be programmed and controlled.

Within this paradigm, that star is nothing but a designed personality whose distinguishing traits are the well-worn tricks of showbiz experts. From the start, the slick entertainment routines designed by the Brandford team are sabotaged by the eruptions of Stanley's unruly body. The committee relentlessly drills him for a stand-up comedy act, but at his debut at the Copa Cafe Stanley is overwhelmed with stage-fright. He stumbles onstage, knocking the microphone over, and instead of delivering a barrage of prepackaged verbal gags, he offers a characteristically Lewisian—yet uncommonly discomfiting—spectacle of maladjustment. Stanley presents his jokes in the wrong order, turning them inside-out, and fails to accommodate himself to conventions of pacing. The extent to which this scene cannibalizes and deforms a familiar comic performance mode qualifies it as the most emphatic and extended "second-order" gagging sequence in Lewis's films. It offers simultaneously the "gagging" of a conventional process of gag-delivery and a persuasive representation of the character's *pain*: as with the opening scenes of the film, the spectator is made acutely aware of Stanley's suffering. The ambivalent feelings raised here make it difficult for both the club-audience and the film-spectator to accept this as "funny" in anything like a conventional sense.

This calamitous outing contrasts with Stanley's solo performance after the Brandford team have deserted their misbegotten star. Determined to show his would-be puppet-masters what he can offer on his own, Stanley replaces the stand-up routine with a sketch entitled "A Big Night in Hollywood." He casts himself as a movie-struck kid—similar to the Lewis-figures in *Hollywood or Bust* (1956) and *The Errand Boy*—who gazes on in fascination at the movie stars attending a swank Hollywood premiere. Rescuing two discarded $100 tickets, the kid sees a path into the star-packed playground of his fantasy. Out of his humble street clothes—with the aid of a knife, a can of black paint and some fast-motion cinematography—the kid improvises a top-hat, cane, black tie, and dress suit. Now that he looks the part, he strolls jauntily off to the theater, and is allowed to enter—and the sketch ends.

As in *The Errand Boy*, Lewis/Stanley plays the eternal fan who, through his innate talent, realizes his ambition to become part of the magical (Hollywood) world of entertainment. Although outwardly he must conform, inside he retains the integrity of the kid. For Stanley, the sketch is the articulation of his own *ideal* of stardom—and, indeed, he becomes an immediate success as a result of it. But the sketch also functions as an allegory of Lewis's own rise to power. When the kid struts into the movie theater at the end of "A Big Night in Hollywood," it is simultaneously the walk that Stanley makes into the big-time of showbiz success. Yet it is also a journey that Lewis has already made himself. Everything in the sketch—and ultimately within the film itself—is defined blatantly in terms of the pervasive textual and intertextual presence "Jerry Lewis." In the circuit of subjective overdetermination revealed through "A Big Night in Hollywood," Jerry Lewis (director) uses Jerry Lewis (performer) to play Stanley Belt (the Lewis-character), whose *impersonation* of the familiar Lewis-figure brings him fame. Furthermore, "A Big Night in Hollywood" is itself an extended version of a sketch Lewis had performed on one of his TV specials in 1957, when he was attempting to consolidate a solo career after the trauma of the "divorce" from Dean Martin.[20]

After the Ed Sullivan show, Stanley's elevated status enables him to take control, and out of Wally Brandford's old crew he fashions his own team. Although Stanley directly turns the tables on Brandford's men, a different tactic is required for Ellen Betts. The only two people in the film who, from early on, recognize and encourage Stanley's natural talent are women: Ellen, and gossip-columnist Hedda

Hopper. At a promotional party, Stanley takes one look at a ludicrous umbrella hat worn by Hopper and is unable to restrain his desire to collapse into hysterical laughter. But instead of feeling affronted, Hopper says to Stanley's PR agent: "You've come across someone who hasn't learned to be phony. He thought something, and he said it—which was real and honest. And now if you apply that to his performance, you've got a great success." Ellen also recognizes Stanley's worth; she is guided by an idealistic and familial agenda that contrasts with the mercenary motives of the men in the Brandford team. She beseeches: "Let's have an understanding as to *why* we're going to do this—if it's at all feasible. Are we going to do this because we're spoiled—and used to a comfortable, well-oiled machine? Or is it simply because we've been happy working as a family, and we hate the thought of breaking up?" It is revealing, though, that Stanley is not merely *incorporated* into the "family" at the end of *The Patsy*, but he secures the *central* position of power. This suggests that the driving motive behind Stanley's success is not really the finding of a place *among* others—a sense of belonging—so much as the achieving of dominance over them. This receives a somewhat ambivalent representation.

Stanley's humanizing of the machinery of professional entertainment coincides with his total control, but in the process Stanley is himself transformed. As he fires off instructions to his newly appointed staff, the business-suited Stanley Belt acts with the polished self-assurance (and implicit self-regard) of Buddy Love. However, once the danger of corruptive egomania is introduced as a possible consequence of stardom, Stanley is immediately killed off. This is not the only foreclosure involved here, for Stanley's brisk "demise" serves also to block the consummation of his relationship with Ellen soon after he has brusquely commanded her to marry him. Lewis kills off the fictional obligations that constrain him, to *create himself* as totalizing presence, as the film's director. Within the discourse of self-creation—of vital importance to the films Lewis directed—heterosexual procreation cannot easily find a place. The process of creating "Jerry Lewis" out of the Lewisian misfit Stanley Belt directly substitutes for "normal" sex—the "Jerry Lewis" who appears at the end of *The Patsy* is not "of woman born."

The most acutely self-mythologizing of Lewis's films, *The Patsy* postulates that the self can be destroyed and reformulated at will, and that the creation of the self is precisely the responsibility of the "creative self." Throughout most of the film, Ellen's principal function is to serve as a maternal presence: she provides emotional and psychological support, nurturing Stanley's fragile ego in his moments of dejection. When Stanley proves that he can make it on his own, his need for such external support is eliminated. His forced exit from the film is swiftly followed by Ellen's own eradication. But where Stanley *disappears* from the screen for his miraculous rebirth as "Jerry Lewis," the mask of "Ellen" is stripped from Ina Balin onscreen—and at the command of her director. As Lewis leads her out through the studio in the final scene, Ina Balin becomes merely one of the personnel over whom he exerts control. Within this particularly accentuated and male-centered discourse of the self, woman occupy, of necessity, a secondary place. So when the *story* moves towards an inevitably more active role for the woman—as sexual partner, as procreator—it is jettisoned. Ellen Betts is exposed as a controlled part of the filmic masquerade that is very firmly in Lewis's own hands.

The ending of *The Patsy* suggests how Lewis's self-directed project necessitates an insistent reformulation of difference. The divisions of sexual difference are, along with more general distinctions between self and other, subjugated to differences existing within the self. Lewis simultaneously exploits and reorders the Hollywood cinema's capacity for heightened illusionism, for fantasy-making. For Lewis, film is expressly a vehicle for *magic*—it makes possible a reformulation of the world, of the self, and of the traditional relations that exist between the two. More pointedly, Lewis's comedies celebrate the nonconformist desires of the "child" who, through fantasy, can reshape the adult world in accordance with his own desires. By giving expression to the "kid" within him, for example, Stanley Belt proves his superiority to the group of manipulative adults who had tried to make him conform to their wishes. Lewis's films repeatedly enact such childlike fantasies of revolt against the demands of the adult world, the sexual world, the world of differences. But what distinguishes Lewis from most film comedians—who frequently show a proclivity toward child-like play and fantasy—is the protection and privilege granted to the radically deforming performer by the director.

The Patsy also exemplifies the problems which began to develop within this project. Lewis continued to invest value in the figure of the "kid," the unspoiled, unknowing exponent of a pre-adult regime equated with honesty, simplicity, and caring. But the "Jerry Lewis" who takes the film in hand at the end of *The Patsy* is himself a shrewd and knowing professional

who displays his mastery of the cinematic machine. And in between these two is the brief eruption of Las Vegas Jerry, elided through blatant prestidigitation. The extreme gear-shifts at the end of the film present, in rapid succession, *opposed*, as well as *distinct*, Lewisian personae. Although the joking "assassination" of Stanley Belt appears to be his punishment for deserting the values of the "kid," the slick director "Jerry Lewis" is at a similar extreme from such simplicity. Even though the film ends as an unmistakable celebration of the magical artificiality of film, the controlling presence of "Jerry Lewis" is inscribed as its fundamental premise. In Lewis's films, the seductive fantasy of eternal childhood is overtly established in resistance to the adult regime. "Jerry Lewis," however, is a very *adult* manipulator, and his towering presence makes it difficult to specify what form of wish-fulfillment is ultimately offered by the film. Does *The Patsy* celebrate the child triumphing over the adult world, or is it concerned more with the adult *seeking* the eternal fantasy of childhood? Or is it, perhaps, the Lewis-film in which the latter most obviously overwhelms the former? The self-directed films offered Jerry-the-Kid the opportunity to take charge of the filmic process of fantasy-making, and to reorder the world in his own image. But to what extent has the idealism of Lewis's Big-Night-in-Hollywood become tarnished by his consolidation as a flamboyantly successful and long familiar component of the Hollywood entertainment machine?

Coming from the Gut?

In the mid-1960s, Lewis's long run as a major cinematic attraction drew to a close. From 1951 to 1963 his films had figures repeatedly among the annual top ten box-office grossers,[21] but his subsequent ventures as star and/or director fared less well, especially after he terminated his 17-year relationship with Paramount Pictures in 1965. After *The Patsy*, Lewis completed only four more films as a director-star before disappearing from the screen for a decade, making a modest return as a total film-maker in the 1980s, with *Hardly Working* (1981) and *Cracking Up* (aka *Smorgasbord*, 1983). The most significant recent addition to Lewis's film canon, though, remains *The King of Comedy* (1983), Martin Scorsese's cult movie which is itself a twisted reworking of *The Patsy*. While famous comedian Jerry Lewis is cast in a straight dramatic role—as Jerry Langford, a comic who has become an institution as a slick talk-show host—serious actor Robert De Niro plays Rupert Pupkin, a would-be comedian-celebrity who kidnaps his idol Langford in a desperate bid to achieve television stardom. A disconcerting black comedy that probes the obsessions of fandom, *The King of Comedy* turns on its head the discourse of stardom in *The Patsy*.

With the decline of his film career in the mid-1960s, Lewis invested his energies increasingly in his role as the presenter and driving force of "The Jerry Lewis MDA Telethon." This annual television event provides a further twist to the dynamics of Lewis's rise to power as it is represented in *The Patsy*. In that film, the professional entertainment machine is ultimately tempered not through the idealistic familial agenda proposed by Ellen but through the strongly self-centered regimes consolidated by, respectively, Stanley Belt and Lewis-the-director. The Telethon, although it is so firmly dominated by its star presenter, nonetheless espouses a rhetoric of "family" that is reminiscent of Ellen's ideal. Lewis and his aides refer continually to the supportive "family" of presenters, performers, and sponsors who donate their time, talent, and money to the cause of the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Lewis's extended surrogate family, however, comprises not simply the "abled" who present the show and the disabled who form its pretext ("Jerry's Kids"), but also the Telethon viewers—who are bonded to Lewis and to the MDA by the "Love Network" (the name Lewis gives to the combination of local stations who contribute to and relay the show). The Telethon's family discourse gains special force from its regular annual presence within the domestic spaces of the United States. Throughout the U.S., Labor Day is Telethon Day—and Jerry Lewis Day—networked for a guaranteed 22 hours into potentially every home in the country. Given that his "family" now encompasses more or less the whole of northern America, it is difficult not to see the Telethon as the apotheosis of Lewis's self-willed celebrity.

Telethon Jerry has aroused suspicion for the way that his work simultaneously promotes both the humanitarian cause of the MDA and his own celebrity. As is the case with Stanley's eventual assuming of control in *The Patsy*, the surrogate family of the Telethon venture is centered around the dominating personality of Jerry Lewis. For many of those who work with Lewis, and for many of the disabled, this is not perceived to be a problem. In a TV news profile shortly before the 1992 Telethon broadcast, airline executive Barry Goldberg—recently struck with a neuro-muscular disease—staunchly defended Lewis's objectives, claiming that "the point about

'Jerry's Kids' is not to make them children but to create a sense of family, with Lewis at the head. . . . There's just something special about it. I mean, he wants to help save lives. And if I could applaud, and I could stand up, I would give Jerry Lewis a standing ovation that would last for a year."[22] Defenders of Telethon Jerry, including Lewis himself, see his tireless work in raising funds and consciousness for the MDA as amply justifying his role as the hub around which the Telethon revolves. In the 1992 broadcast, wheelchair-bound Shelly Obran, a "Jerry's Kid" for 11 years, was one of many paraded before the TV cameras as both an encouraging example of individual perseverance and a testimonial to the worth of Lewis's MDA project. She declared emotively that Lewis was a vital example to the handicapped because of the extent to which he *believed in himself.* Her eulogy was moving at the same time as it was Telethon-generic, especially her valediction: "We all need heroes."

But Lewis's role as Telethon Jerry has spurred two significant forms of popular protest. Firstly, disabled activists have accused Lewis of "disability bigotry," claiming that he reinforces stereotypes of the disabled as child-like misfits to be pitied and patronized. In the 1990s, various disability-rights pressure groups—including Disabled in Action, the Tune Out Jerry Coalition, and Jerry's Orphans—have been vocal in rejecting both the spectacle of pity which is the Telethon's modus operandi and Lewis's self-appointed role as hero and father-figure to the disabled. For his part, Lewis claims that the means are justified by the end—namely, the high profile he has earned for the MDA and the fact that the Telethon has generated over a billion dollars for the cause. Lewis has defended himself with a confidence that recalls his justification of total film-making: "I'm spitting my gut out. I'm coming from my gut. . . . I am so right because my heart and my gut steers me. I'm one of the luckiest men alive. I do very good work. No one can tell me different."[23]

A second vein of criticism issues from the frenzied outrage of the American tabloids. Magazines like the *National Enquirer* have represented the "real life" Telethon Jerry as the hated antipode both to the self-professed "caring individual" and the much-loved Jerry of the Martin-Lewis films. On the front pages, pictures of an open-mouthed, seemingly furious Lewis accompany shrieking headlines like "Jerry Lewis Goes Berserk—After He's Dumped as TV Telethon Host"[24] or "Jerry Lewis Attacked Me in My Wheelchair! . . . Charges Crippled Victim of Muscular Dystrophy."[25] In the stories to which these words refer, Lewis-the-philanthropist is exposed as an egomaniacal monster who is capable of fearsome rage when thwarted or insulted. In the second of these articles, Doug Bady, "a crippled wheelchair-bound midget comedian," describes how Lewis "viciously" attacked him, "screamed obscenities," and threatened to kill

Lewis with daughter Danielle on the 1992 Telethon

Telethon 1989—Julius Kelp revisited?

him after he had appeared in an anti-Jerry skit. (A "witness" claimed "Lewis was red-faced, like some wild beast. His eyes were bulging and he was spitting as he screamed at Doug.")[26]

The Strange Career of Jerry Lewis

Lewis has certainly come a long way since he began nervously treading the boards in his teens, performing exaggerated mimes to accompany popular and operatic records. When Dean Martin took over the role of the "voice," the security of his sheltering presence left Lewis free to play out his masque of the dysfunctional masculine body. But after the split with Martin, Lewis had only himself—or, rather, a profusion of selves, spun out from a center which seemed increasingly incapable of holding together such an atomic dispersal of personality. The Telethon celebrates simultaneously Lewis's multiplicity and his limitations. It makes a fascinating culmination to his career, but it is difficult not to perceive Lewis's role within it as an exercise both in awesome self-aggrandisement and grotesquely unaware self-parody.

Above all else, the annual MDA extravaganza brings into sharp focus a problem Lewis has faced throughout his career—the problem of how the performer can be reconciled with the extremity of that which is performed. In the Martin-Lewis period, the "straight" man sketched in an idealized profile of masculine identity and sexuality as a backdrop against

which Lewis could perform his deformations. As a director, his project was far more ambitious, not only furthering his celebrity as a solo performer but also establishing his stylistic signature as a "total film-maker" through calculated deformations of the conventions of genre, narrative, and comic delivery. But where these distinctive achievements as a comic star and film-maker are premised upon *distancing* himself from familiar rules, norms, and conventions, the persona of Telethon Jerry invites and requires *proximity*. However, Lewis's sentimental embrace of the cause of the disabled is filtered through the distancing conventions of professionalized televisual/Las Vegas entertainment, where the demands of the "show" are inevitably a second-order substitute for and simulation of "feeling."

Through forceful manipulation of his "personality" and his history, the Lewis of the Telethon holds together a grandiose mixture of in-your-face pathos, variety spectacle, fundraising campaign, and corporate self-promotion. Telethon Jerry is at a far remove from the Idiot-Kid: his body no longer functions as a signifying simulation of disability and disadvantage, and he presents himself as an extraordinarily able vehicle for expressing the plight and the hopes of the disabled. While the Lewis who prowls in front of the Telethon cameras is manifestly a slick professional, a grand old man of the media entertainment machine, the backgrounds are dominated by an affectionate caricature sketch of the young, unkempt, uncoordinated Lewis. And his earlier performative strategies of comic deformation still erupt repeatedly through the staid professionalism of the Telethon host—although in a far more restrained and controlled manner. Lewis will interrupt the rehearsed performances of others, or will draw attention to and mimic the cue cards held in front of him, or he will rush up to the camera and push his face into it—a technique Lewis was known for in his 1950s TV work. These moments of familiar "spontaneity" are important evocations of the young, pre-Telethon Lewis. They serve to reaffirm Lewis's history as a comedian, but, at the same time, they make plain the difference between Lewis-the-comic and the crusading man-with-a-mission.

As Telethon Jerry is bombarded by continual onscreen eulogies from both sufferers of dystrophic disease and familiar showbiz personalities, the "Love Network" carries a forceful message of love for "Jerry

25th Anniversary of the Telethon: Lewis "does it his way"

Lewis"—man, messiah, institution. The evocations of Lewis's earlier comic style serve both to "humanize" and to deify the man. They are a reminder of the self-contained past that the man-god "Jerry Lewis" has grown out of but not abandoned. Telethon Jerry, the humanitarian, has ascended from the ranks of mere mortal celebrity. As in his auteurist films of the early 1960s, the Lewis of the Telethon deforms the norms of his past, "simple" celebrity. He has reassembled the elements of his earlier personae to create a startlingly new, yet equally contradictory, vision of "Jerry Lewis." Thirty years ago, when Lewis reinvented himself as a "total film-maker," the adventurous deformation of structured self-containment—of narrative, gag, and mood—was accompanied, inevitably, by a studied reformulation of "Jerry Lewis." The same principle holds for Telethon Jerry, although what is remarkable about this particular incarnation is that Lewis's vehicle is no longer a deformation of the operating principles of comedy, but a deformation of the figure and the clearly self-centered rationale of Jerry Lewis, comic.

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Notes

1. Lynn Snowden, "Fifty ways to kill an insect by an ex-junkie exterminator," *The Guardian*, April 25, 1992, p. 25 (originally published in *Esquire*, February 1992).
2. Jim Hillier, ed., "Struggling on Two Fronts" [Godard in interview with Jacques Bontemps, Jean-Louis Comolli, Michel Delahaye, and Jean Narboni], *Cahiers du Cinéma: 1960–1968: New Wave, New Cinema, Re-evaluating Hollywood* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 295.
3. Andrew Sarris, *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions: 1929–1968* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1968), p. 243.
4. Jerry Lewis, *The Total Film-Maker* (New York: Warner Paperback Library, 1973), pp. 32–33.
5. Leonard Maltin, *The Great Movie Comedians* (New York: Crown, 1978), pp. 217–18.
6. Ibid., p. 218.
7. For a general consideration of the comedian-comedy, see Steve Seidman, *Comedian Comedy: A Tradition in Hollywood Film* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1981).
8. Bosley Crowther, *"My Friend Irma," The New York Times*, September 29, 1949.
9. *"The Geisha Boy," Newsweek*, December 24, 1958.
10. Jean-Pierre Coursodon, "Jerry Lewis," in Coursodon and Pierre Sauvage, *American Directors*, volume II (New York: McGraw Hill, 1983), p. 197.
11. Ibid., p. 190.
12. Scott Bukatman, "Paralysis in Motion: Jerry Lewis's Life as a Man," *Camera Obscura* 17 (Fall 1988), p. 197.
13. Michael Stern, "Jerry Lewis b. Joseph Levitch, Newark, New Jersey, 1926 res. Hollywood," *Bright Lights* 1, no. 3 (Summer 1975), p. 6.
14. In his work as gagman, writer, and director, Frank Tashlin was one of the distinctive creative forces in American screen comedy from the late 1940s to the early 1960s. His brash, flash comic style—nurtured in the animated short—was perfectly suited to the context of 1950s consumerism, as is shown by his satirical swipes at Hollywood artifice (*Hollywood or Bust*, 1956), rock'n'roll (*The Girl Can't Help It*, 1956), and the advertising business (*Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?*, 1957). In Lewis, Tashlin stumbled upon the nearest possible human approximation to a cartoon figure—a point made explicitly at the end of *The Geisha Boy*, where Lewis impersonates Bugs Bunny (a former Tashlin protégé). The relationship was highly productive: Lewis worked with Tashlin on two of the final Martin-Lewis vehicles and on six of the solo films made between 1957 and 1964. On numerous occasions, Lewis has claimed that his own style as a gagman and director owed a substantial debt to his experiences with Tashlin.
15. Frank Krutnik, "A Spanner in the Works? Genre, Narrative and the Hollywood Comedian," Henry Jenkins and Kristine Karnick, eds., *Classical Hollywood Comedy* (New York: AFI/Routledge, 1994), pp. 17–38.
16. Stern, "Jerry Lewis," p. 5.
17. Ibid., p. 4 ff.
18. Ibid., p. 10.
19. The horror-story associations persist in discourses on Lewis and his career. Leslie Bennetts concluded her recent profile of Lewis by suggesting that within the "monstrous" machine "Jerry Lewis," a fragile and pained Joseph Levitch (Lewis's real name) is seeking refuge, or perhaps escape: "The voice on the other end of the phone is the powerful one of the 67-year-old man, but inside it I hear something else, something faint but as persistent as an echo that follows you wherever you go. It is the pain of the angry little boy, and I suddenly realize that the message delivered by the protesters is the one he has heard in his nightmares all his life: They don't love you. No matter how much you try to do for them, they don't love you." "Jerry vs. The Kids," *Vanity Fair*, September 1993, p. 37.
20. "The Jerry Lewis Show," NBC, December 27, 1957. This sketch was recently included in "Jerry . . . Alone at the Top," the third part of "Martin and Lewis: Their Golden Age of Comedy," shown on the Disney cable channel in 1992.
21. Corbett Steinman, *Reel Facts: The Movie Book of Records* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), p. 405.
22. "Prime Time Live," ABC TV, September 3, 1992.
23. Interview with Chris Wallace, "Prime Time Live," ABC TV, September 3, 1992.
24. *National Enquirer*, May 15, 1990, p. 1.
25. *National Enquirer*, July 10, 1990, p. 1.
26. Tony Brenna, "Crippled Midget With Muscular Dystrophy Charges . . . Jerry Lewis Roughed Me Up and Threatened to Kill Me," *National Enquirer*, July 10, 1990, p. 17.

Reviews

Why Has Bodhidharma Left for the East?

Producer/director/writer/cinematographer/editor: Bae Yong-kyun. Music: Chin Kyn-Yong. Milestone.

The film *Why Has Bodhidharma Left for the East?* (*Dharmaga Tongjoguro Kan Kkadalgun?*, 1989), by Korean director Bae Yong-kyun, tells the deceptively simple story of three generations of monks at a remote Buddhist temple on top of Mount Chonan in Korea.[1] As an official selection of "Un Certain Regard" at the Cannes Film Festival in 1989 and winner of the Golden Leopard at the 1989 Locarno Film Festival, it marks the first director's award in the history of Korean cinema. The film is itself a meditative experience for the ensemble of non-professional actors, for the director with his years of Zen practice, and for the viewer. Bae Yong-kyun spent ten years as screenwriter, cinematographer, director, and editor of this film. (Only the music is composed by someone else: Chin Kyn-Yong.)

Bodhidharma (A.D. 460-534) was the Indian monk considered to be the founder of Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism.[2] According to legend, he traveled from India eastward, supposedly arriving in China in A.D. 520. In Bae Yong-kyun's film, the three main characters—the venerable Zen master, Hyegok (Yi Pan-yong), the young disciple, Kibong (Sin Won-sop), and the orphan and novice, Haejin (Huang Hae-jin), adopted by Hyegok—embark, individually and communally, on paths of self-understanding and self-transcendence that pass through breathtaking scenes of the five elements: earth, water, fire, air, and ether.

Near the beginning of the film, the camera moves from a reflection of Haejin's face in a pool to a close-up of water poured into a simple tea bowl, to another close-up of the mouth of a golden Buddha statue. These links are legible, but then a close-up of a toad walking laboriously across the road suddenly appears on the screen, followed by a close-up of the hands of the "middle generation" monk, Kibong, chopping up a tree branch. Visually and thematically, this is a film about interconnectedness, and about the transformation of one event, object, person into another in a regenerative chain of causality. This regeneration lies behind the master's admonitions to his disciples, just as it underlies the sound links that connect one scene to the next. Legibility and ambiguity interact in *Bodhidharma* to produce a film that, like a Zen *koan* (riddle), is at once astonishingly clear and elliptical and absurd. As Jay Carr wrote in his *Boston Globe* review (January 28, 1994), "The brand of Zen we get here is rarefied, yet highly pragmatic, realistic and tough-minded."

After throwing a pebble at a bird (which later dies), Haejin is haunted by its mate. Later, Haejin himself almost dies in a chain of events somehow connected with the bird—a chain that sends him plunging into the river and later crashing through the forest. An ox that had earlier escaped from its pen reappears and starts to lead him back to the temple, in a manner reminiscent of the ox-herding pictures of Zen Buddhism.[3] Only afterwards do we realize that this ox is probably but another form of Haejin's mother, represented by a woman drenched in the waters of the river.[4] As she opens her mouth to awaken the sleeping boy who lies exhausted by his ordeal in the forest, the ox bellows.

The circular format of the film appears as well in round objects like the moon and the mouth of the tea bowl, calling to mind the Chinese phrase "the circle of heaven." It could also refer to the circle of rebirth, suffering, and death in Buddhist cosmology, or to Zen paintings and calligraphy of the circle. The round shapes of clouds, considered symbols of abundance in Korean art, frequently fill the screen in long, contemplative sequences. The soft mountain scenes evoke the gentle natural environment of the Korean countryside.

A circle of caring continues throughout the film, adding a note of intimacy to the geographical isolation of the master's temple. Shots of Haejin nursing the injured Kibong after his desperate flight into the river are crosscut with the actual scenes of rescue in the raging water. Temporal and spatial leaps like these cause us to wonder which part of the film is reality, which part dream.

Bodhidharma is also a film of stillness. Scenes of a monk meditating are sometimes shot from the rear in extreme close-up, giving the seated figure colossal, even heroic, proportions. When Kibong meditates, perched on a rock over the roaring stream, he becomes the embodiment of the meditative mind, which is both still and full of the movement of the universe. Occasional glimpses of Buddhist statues in the temple call to mind both the historical Buddha, who achieved enlightenment and then passed on from this earth, and the appearance of the sacred in human form. As the

Buddha of Healing (Yaksa Yorae),
Korea, ca. ninth century A.D.

Japanese Buddhist priest Kukai (774-835) stated: "Suchness transcends forms, but without depending on forms it cannot be realized."[5] This paradoxical relationship between form and formlessness is apparent in the elegant proportions of works such as the Korean gilt bronze statue of the Yaksa Yorae, the Buddha of Healing, based on Chinese T'ang models, or the beautiful Korean statues of the Maitreya (Miroku) Buddha of the Future, with right leg crossed over left and right hand touching a faintly smiling face in the gentlest of contemplations. The three main characters all engage in this dance of form and formlessness, in a studied alternation between light and darkness.

The elements reign in *Bodhidharma*. While Hyegok, the old master, is described by another elderly monk as being "like a beacon from a lighthouse," the small child Haejin is like the candle he carries to light his way at night. The master talks of light: "If you free the moon inside of you, it will light the whole world." The *koan* later presented to Kibong by Hyegok speaks of the moon and of one's own heart, just as the *koan* of the title (in its slightly altered form) has revealed to Zen masters over the centuries the depth of a disciple's path toward enlightenment.

Each of the three characters encounters violence and shadows in his life—Haejin with a group of children from the lower areas of the mountain (filmed in a painful slow motion) who try to push him under the water . . . Kibong with his internal struggles over his abandonment of his family, and with the master's harsh slap with a stick when he senses Kibong's wavering. Even the old master, seemingly so unshakable, is seen pacing back and forth and pitting his frail body against the fiercest of rapids when his disciples go astray.

This is a film of fire. Following his master's precise instructions, Kibong cremates Hyegok's body in a carefully tended fire and then scatters the ashes throughout the countryside, observed by a shivering Haejin, a solitary bird on a nearby limb, and the ox (shown in a startling close-up of an eye filled with tears). As if immersed in the profound silence of another world, the young monk, covered with ash, is seen in reflection in a still pool as he empties his bag of ash and pounded bones. The next day he leaves the temple he had so arduously journeyed to enter. Haejin, alone at the temple, tends the cooking fire by himself as he gazes into the flame.

Bodhidharma is a film of journeys, of losing and finding one's way. Slow-motion close-ups of the feet of Kibong as he approaches the master's temple for the first time emphasize the inward journey theme. But it is Kibong's trip back to the "dusty world" to beg for funds for the master's herbal medicine that reveals in the sharpest detail the journey he has undergone, and what still remains.

The city is full of flashing red lights, vendors hawking blue jeans, the misery of a young man literally harnessed to a cart of snacks and cheap liquor which he pulls through the streets at night. Although not overtly a politically motivated film, *Bodhidharma* does present disturbing, and haunting, images of urban slum life that go beyond a simple exhortation to abandon city life and escape to a temple in the hills. The hypnotic sound of Kibong beating on the traditional wooden instrument (*mog-tak*) used during meditation mixes with the more dissonant cries of the city. The echoes of the insistent beating sound, and the increasingly shrill cries of the slum dwellers, echo in

all subsequent scenes. While shots of the city are marked by a close-framed and claustrophobic melange of images, those of the temple and its surroundings celebrate the glory of the natural setting and the comfortable state of decay into which the old wooden building has fallen.

When Kibong returns to the city, his eyes meet those of a young slum-dweller. The gaunt face of this city youth (representing Kibong in his life before taking vows) forms the opening image of the film, and his despondent and then anguished glances serve as a foil for the meditating Kibong. These two images of the same man are more than contrasts: they are two inevitabilities that—like the earlier montage sequence of tea bowl, hands, and toad—are intrinsically interconnected.

In the early life of the Buddha, the overly protected prince Gautama journeyed out of the royal compound and encountered illness, poverty, despair. In a similar fashion, Kibong, returning from the city to the temple along a narrow path, passes an old man and his retarded child peering curiously from the window of their worn-down farmhouse. Life, with all its weight and fragility, can be seen in the face of this resigned old man as he rests for a moment. The lesson is not lost on the fledgling monk.

Trapped between a desire for enlightenment and ties to the suffering of the mundane world, including the suffering of his blind mother (widowed at an early age), Kibong attempts to silence the voices within him through austerities. In an interior monologue brilliantly staged in silhouette and spoken by two figures, a man perched on a ledge listens to another outline his reasons for returning to the needs of the quotidian world. Are these men two distinct figures—Kibong and a fellow monk who appeared earlier in the film—or a dialogue between two sides of Kibong's psyche, or both? If attachment to desire is the root of all suffering, as the Buddha taught, where does a passionate desire for enlightenment fit in the order of the universe?

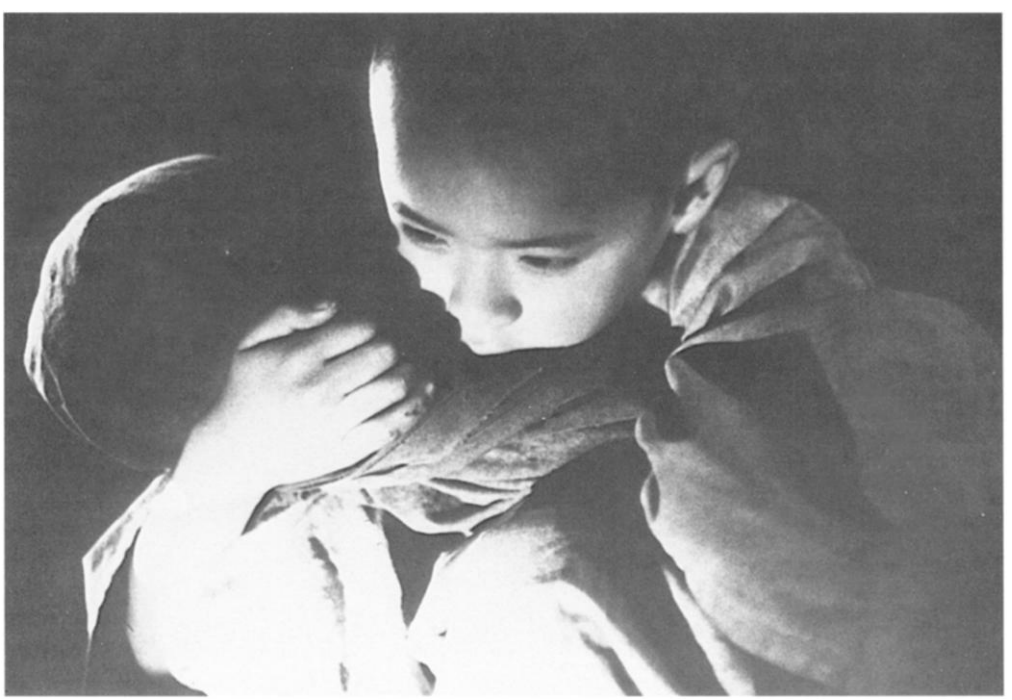
Kibong is aware of his need for his master's teachings, and yet it is the master's death that proves the ultimate *koan*. But this is not a film about endings. As Rhim Hye-kyung writes in a review of the film in *Cinemaya*:

> There is no room in this film for the superfluous; there is a mathematical precision of dramaturgies—of story, light, sound, music. The overwhelming scenic beauty is indeed contemplative, but unlike Ozu, where tranquillity implies a sadness at the transitory nature of human existence, Bae's film is a vivid and affirmative engagement in the recognition of this reality.[6]

Bodhidharma:
The central debate

Beginnings, not endings, appear as well in the parallels between child and master. It is the child who is led; it is the child who leads. The child is the one who explores, while the master has renounced such explorations. Who is the enlightened one? Who is the child and who is the master?

In the scene in which he accidentally falls into the water, Haejin struggles and appears to be drowning. When he gives up and just floats, he reaches the shore safely. This message of nonattachment to what is transitory and in flux is what the old master instructs when the child remains curious about the diseased tooth which had been pulled from his mouth (and, following an old custom, tossed up on the temple rooftop). After the death of the master, Haejin first embraces and then suddenly decides to burn the package of his master's belongings Kibong has left with him. This could be a childish act of anger, but we sense otherwise. The previous night, following the master's cremation, the exhausted Kibong had been awakened by the surprising sound of a child's voice chanting the sutras.

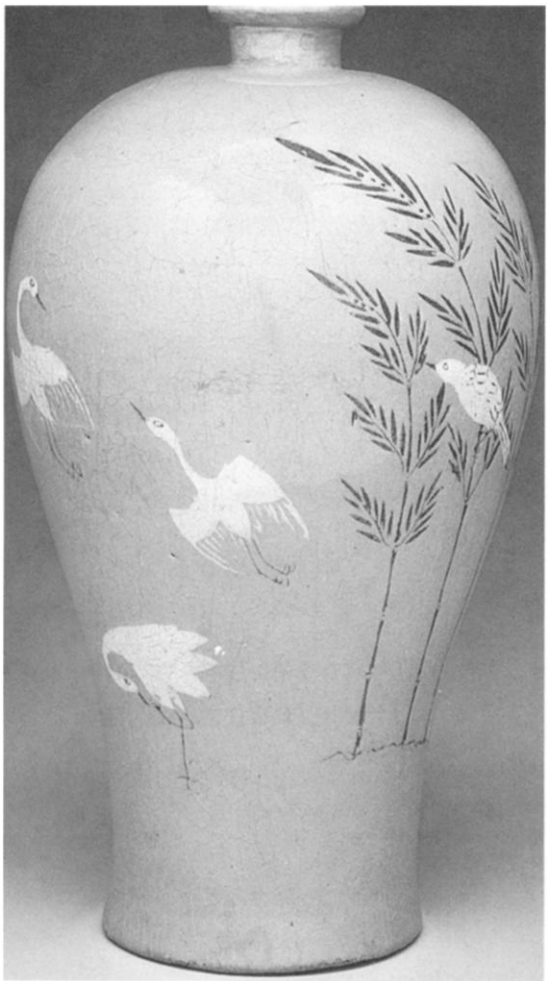


Haejin clutches his master's remaining belongings

Bodhidharma partakes of the qualities of Korean art, marked by spontaneity, straightforwardness, and a modesty that hides its own splendor. Comfortable with the "imperfect" and the asymmetrical, Korean art displays a love of nature and a preference for a gentleness of line and modeling.[7] Buddhism was introduced into Korea from India, via China, in the late fourth century A.D., and spread among the common people. Although Korea received Confucianism and Taoism from China as well, it has always retained its own unique national identity despite repeated attacks from hostile neighbors, including a 35-year annexation by Japan that ended only with the close of WWII. One aspect of this unique national identity is the way in which shamanism has retained an intimate relationship with Buddhism in Korea and continues to be considered vital in the popular culture.[8]

In *Bodhidharma*, a scene of a vaguely shamanistic Buddhist dance in the temple of the lower part of the mountain unites the five elements as it also unites light and shadow, life and death. A ghostly figure in flowing white Korean dress dances before the seated monks, later pounding out on a large standing drum the last moments of the master's existence in this realm. Crosscuts between the sound of the drum and shots of Kibong and Haejin—first attracted to the beauty of the dance, and then returning to their temple through tall grasses as day dawns—underscore the urgency of their return. When Haejin announces that he can smell the master's medicine burning, the viewer knows that they have arrived too late. With a quiet, sliding motion, the pure white garb of the dancer reenters the night.

At the close of the film, a solitary bird flies up into the heavens. Our eye follows the track of the wings as



Vase, Korea,
12th century

they disappear from sight, just as we trace the flight of the birds exquisitely "captured" on this 12th-century Korean celadon vase. This film teaches not through its narrative but through its overpowering visual offerings: a montage of close-ups of the child's mirrorlike face, of the mist rising over the mountains, of the lotus which is both rooted and transcendent. Words are written in the calligraphy of ash on water filled with the promise of new life. In Zen Buddhism, words and logical thinking are seen as impediments to a realization of the true nature of reality. The director states that Zen Buddhism is the setting for the film, not its final meaning, and that the viewer can approach the film without prior knowledge of the kinds of questions or answers intended.

In the end, there is our memory of the pivotal interior monologue scene of the monk who remains separate from the outside world, reading his text by the river, while the "other monk" (presumably Kibong) walks alone along the rice fields at sunset, returning to the world. In this return he follows the path of the Bodhisattva of Mercy, whose practice toward Enlightenment is to assist others along the path to salvation. Why did Bodhidharma leave for the east? As we are told in the film: "To arrive is to leave, to leave is to arrive."

LINDA C. EHRLICH

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Notes

1. Bae Yong-kyun, born in 1951 in Taegu, Korea, received his doctorate from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Korea, and presently teaches painting there.
The author would like to thank Bae Yong-kyun and Drs. Cynthia Contreras and Miriam Levering for their comments on earlier drafts of this article, and Milestone Film & Video (the distributors of the film) for their assistance. The Department of Romance and Asian Languages, University of Tennessee/Knoxville, assisted with the purchase of several of the illustrations.
2. In Chinese, Bodhidharma is known as P'u-t'i-ta-mo or Ta-mo, and in Japanese as Daruma. He is a frequent subject of paintings in both countries, and is also considered a popular deity in Japan.
3. The "ox-herding pictures" are a form of didactic art which present a model of the path toward discovering the true nature of the mind and the true nature of Emptiness (*shunyata*). The series of pictures are frequently marked as follows: searching, seeing the traces, seeing the ox, catching the ox, leading the ox, riding the ox home, ox forgotten/self alone, both ox and self forgotten, return to origins, entering the village with bliss-bestowing hands. The connection between Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism and the "ox-herding pictures" began as early as the Southern Sung period (1127–1279). A famous example of a handscroll of ten *sumi-e* (inkwash paintings) based on this theme is attributed to the 15th-century artist-monk Shūbun and is owned by Shōkoku-ji temple in Japan.
4. The fact that few women appear in this film reflects the setting (a remote Buddhist temple) rather than any political statement on the part of the director (personal correspondence, September 1993).
5. Cited in Richard Pilgrim, *Buddhism and the Arts of Japan* (Chambersburg, PA: Anima Books, 1991), p. 30.
6. *Cinemaya* 5 (Autumn 1989), p. 33.
7. Along with an adherence to principles of simplicity and naturalness, there are also moments of extraordinary splendor in Korean art, particularly in the glistening gold jewelry, hair ornaments, and crowns, and also moments of earthy humor, in the genre paintings produced from around the 17th century.
8. It is believed that the shaman (*mudang*), in a state of possession, is able to communicate with a deity during shamanistic rites (*kut*).

Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston: gilt bronze statue (gift of Edward J. Holmes); celadon vase (Charles B. Hoyt Collection).

The Cement Garden

Writer/director: Andrew Birkin, from the novel by Ian McEwan. Producers: Bee Gilbert, Ene Vanaveski. Cinematographer: Stephen Blackman. Music: Edward Shearmur. October Films.

At the time of its release, *The Cement Garden* gained notoriety as a film about teen incest, a misconception that put it in double jeopardy with critics and the public. The film does indeed *involve* teen incest, but anyone who goes to it in hopes of kinky sex will be disgruntled. On the other hand, *Garden* is certainly not a clinical case study. The distributor's press kit included an unintentionally hilarious commentary by incest authority Judith Alpert, who "wonders what went on off-screen" and detects sexual abuse in every corner. No doubt the distributors wanted to shield themselves against the Jesse Helmses on one side and feminist/child protection groups on the other by having Dr. Alpert endow the film with documentary values. But *The Cement Garden* is no more concerned with instruction than with titillation. It is fiction, and remarkable fiction at that.

Julie (Charlotte Gainsbourg) demonstrates her athletic skills

While focusing on the everyday and not-so-everyday activities of a family in crisis, *Garden* explores the moral implications of individualism and collectivism, holding an even finer balance between realism and allegory than the novel on which it's based. I am using the term "allegory" here not in the traditional sense of a symbolic level that is easily distinguished from and bears a clear relationship to the ostensive level (as in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*) but in the looser modern sense that applies to such novels as Kafka's *The Trial* and *The Castle*, Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, and C. S. Lewis's *Perelandra* trilogy, in all of which the two levels frequently merge.[1] It is at least theoretically possible to read such novels—or to see the film versions of *The Trial* and *Lord of the Flies*—without being conscious of their allegorical level. While Welles' *The Trial* rejects realism throughout and could be enjoyed as an expressionist fantasy, most films with an allegorical bent, including Westerns such as *High Noon* and science fiction such as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, in addition to *Lord of the Flies*, begin realistically and reveal their symbolic level with care. *The Cement Garden* takes a different approach: it begins unrealistically and then becomes more realistic as its allegory emerges.

Birkin prepares us for allegory at the outset with details of Father's obsessively neat garden and then a long shot of the house, a rectangular box that might well be made of cement, standing by itself in a wasteland that extends to high rises and cranes on the horizon. This recalls Tati country: everything appears real enough (the location is London's dockland), but the views are stylized, detached. Father, with his pipe and his determination to cover the entire yard with cement, also recalls Tati, though with a darker and far more constricted individualism.

Almost at once Father (who, like Mother, remains nameless) dies of a heart attack while working on the yard. Now the style and, for a time at least, the incidents shift to realism. The four children—Julie (about 17), Jack (16), Susie (12), and Tom (7)—variously squabble, brood, complain, or try to be helpful. Mother keeps busy looking after the household and trying to give the children moral support. But more

Nuclear family: (from left) Julie, Jack (Andrew Robertson), Tom (Ned Birkin), and Sue (Alice Coulthard)

and more she takes to her bed with a mysterious ailment, until she too dies.

The children decide not to report Mother's death to the authorities for fear they'll be split up among foster homes. Julie and Jack place Mother's body in a large metal locker in the basement and cover it with cement. Unlike the novel, the film doesn't try to explain why no one ever visits the family or inquires about Mother's absence. The stylized opening, along with intermittent shots of the house and its surrounding wasteland, establishes the family's isolation as a nonrealistic given. Also unlike the novel, the children's only interaction with other people away from the house consists of a few brief scenes at the school entrance. These differences could be due at least partly to budget constraints and to necessary changes in duration between written word and image plus sound. Nevertheless, they help to support the film's allegorical implications—the formation of an us-against-the-world group—amid the impact of its visual and aural realism.

After Mother's "burial," Julie acquires a boyfriend, a man named Derek, and it becomes clear that he wants to be accepted as part of the family group. It's also clear that Jack is jealous. Derek notices an odd smell in the house (Julie says it comes from Jack, who hasn't bathed since Mother died) and, in a scene that makes its allegorical point through suspense and believable reactions from all concerned, confronts the children: Isn't there a body under the cement in the basement? The children close ranks against him, and shortly afterward Julie seals his exclusion by going to bed with Jack.

The balance between realism and allegory rests largely on Birkin's skillful use of point of view. The novel is written in the first person with Jack as the

narrator. Birkin preserves this focus without any heavy-handed use of subjective techniques. The only voiceovers come from a science-fiction novel that Jack reads, and they're spoken in the American-accented voice of its space-captain hero. The only conspicuous subjective camera views are parallel scenes of Father and Derek at the dining-room table. Birkin's primary strategy is to structure the film on scenes where Jack is present.

However, this strategy isn't applied rigidly. When Father dies, Jack has taken a short bathroom break from helping cement the yard, and the fatal collapse is intercut with his reaching a masturbatory climax. The scene where Derek interrogates the children about the smell in the basement begins shortly before Jack arrives. Such minor exceptions maintain fluidity and an element of surprise without blurring the focus on Jack.

At first he is a completely self-absorbed adolescent, lazy, messy, resentful of criticism and requests, and continually taking the short cut to gratifying his hormones—as his absence from Father's death ironically emphasizes. We, of course, are forced to live with this character, and although we may start out with a little sympathy—in the first subjective shot Father irritatingly nags Jack/us—we may also hope for change. The latitude of Birkin's focus reflects Jack's occasional signs of interest outside himself. He gazes at Mother as she sits lost in thought at the kitchen table with its breakfast debris. He shows an erotic interest in Julie. He even goes out of his way to threaten a bully who persecutes Tom at school.

There are also glimmers of a mind at work: Jack's fascination with the science-fiction novel, flashback memories of the family at the beach, and a striking juxtaposition of quasi-subjective images—bedridden Mother with Julie, Susie, and Tom sitting beside her, followed by a dilapidated bed against a cracked wall in a partly demolished house. This is a superb filmic equivalent of the scene in the novel where Jack explores a demolished house and sees a mattress: "I thought of my own bedroom, of Julie's, my mother's, all rooms that would one day collapse."

Julie and Jack

Jack begins to "emerge" after Mother's death. Though he can't quite bring himself to drag the body down to the basement (Julie does it), he willingly helps mix cement and cover the body in the locker. The turning point comes after he hears Julie attribute the basement smell to his body. That night Jack wakes to a storm and runs outside to dance naked in the rain. He now keeps himself clean; confronts Derek in the basement; helps Tom get back to sleep when he wakes at night crying; and finally is taken to bed by Julie.

Although these post-storm events are presented as realistically as ever—indeed, the lengthy continuous scene between first-time performers Andrew Robertson as Jack and Birkin's son Ned as Tom is a tour de force of easy naturalism[2]—Jack's behavior now appears in a much stronger allegorical light than before. There are no specific motives for the new Jack, any more than there are for Julie's readiness to have sex with him. Julie has existed more on the allegorical plane from the start, since the focus on Jack leaves her behavior mysterious. So now, at the end, the clearest explanation for their incest appears to be the allegorical one: Julie and Jack choose the solidarity of their group over outsiders.

It seems only natural that the ostensive level and the symbolic level of an allegory should work hand in hand and lead to the same conclusion. In *The Cement Garden*, however, they do not: the film leaves the viewer with a provocative crisscross of reactions. In the final sequence alone, the incest taboo is pitted against the happy tenderness of Julie and Jack, which in turn is pitted against the imminent threat of outsiders—the sound of Derek hammering at the cement in the basement and the flashing lamp of a police car. But the whole film has been quietly accumulating evidence on various sides of the incest/solidarity issue.

Father's death is a reminder that the family is now less stable, more vulnerable to outside forces. When Mother takes to her bed, the children tend to gravitate to her room: even Jack joins in when his 16th birthday party is held there. Planning to go into hospital, Mother tells Jack that he and Julie will have to be "father and mother." After her death, the children's desire for "family" becomes an obsession.

Seen as part of a narrative rather than a case study, the sexual elements that now emerge present a more varied picture than Dr. Alpert's preconceptions allow. Whereas Jack's staring at Julie's crotch belongs to the genital role of "father and mother," his brushing cement from her face after the basement burial implies affection and companionship. Later, when Julie and Susie dress Tom up as a girl, Jack is almost as shocked as Dr. Alpert; but Julie points out that it's okay for a girl to wear pants and a boy's shirt, implying that the converse is stigmatized not by sexual perversion but by sexism. When Jack climbs into Tom's bed to talk him to sleep he is naked, but there's no sign of any sexual inclination toward his kid brother. Narratively, all of these incidents mark the children's increasing physical and mental closeness that culminates in incest. There is a double irony here. Physical closeness blinds Jack and Julie to the imminent threat from Derek and the police; and Jack's progress from self-centered individual to group member has now spiraled around to bring him the gratification he always wanted.

Films rarely focus on the complex tension between individualism and solidarity. In most cases, either the two forces are blended in mutual loyalty (all for one and one for all) or any conflict between them is resolved in the triumph of one or the other. *The Cement Garden* begins by having viewers identify with an unappealing individualist and ends by confronting them with the equation, group solidarity = incest. Thus the question of when and to what extent individualism/solidarity is good in any group (familial, ethnic, political, national, etc.) vibrates through the entire fabric of the film. Not that *The Cement Garden* can be reduced to its allegory—the realistic details are too vivid and distinct for that. But the provocative question it leaves open at the end accounts for much of the film's power.

WILLIAM JOHNSON

■ William Johnson is the New York editor of *Film Quarterly*.

Notes

1. In the *Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (ed. Alex Preminger, Princeton University Press, 1965), Northrop Frye writes: "We have allegory when the events of a narrative obviously and continuously refer to another simultaneous structure of events or ideas, whether historical events, moral or philosophical ideas, or natural phenomena." Many other definitions exist, and the borders between allegory, symbolism, fable, myth, etc., are in continual dispute.
2. All four children's roles are performed superbly. As Julie, Charlotte Gainsbourg (Birkin's French niece via his sister Jane) is the only one with previous film experience. Alice Coulthard as Susie was actually younger than her screen character. In addition, Sinead Cusack is effective as Mother, and two bilingual actors, Hanns Zischler and Jochen Horst, are more than adequate as Father and Derek (the film had German financing). Interestingly, the family group is represented by four different nationalities.

Annual Film Quarterly

Book Roundup Part II

African Cinema

Politics and Culture

By Manthia Diawara. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. 1992. $29.95 cloth; $10.95 paper.

African Cinema: Politics and Culture is primarily a historical text that details the emergence, existence, and contemporary disposition of sub-Saharan African cinema. In the introduction, Manthia Diawara states that "clearly, film production in Africa has a complex background. A mere listing of films made by Africans, although helpful, would not clarify the structural and political issues." (viii) It is apparent then that the book will attempt to integrate issues of culture and politics into its historical reading of film production.

With the aim of the book clearly stated, I would suggest that its initial importance stems from its ability to make up for the dearth of information on African film written in English. Recently there have been several books on Third World cinema—Roy Armes' *Third World Film Making and the West,* John H. Downing's *Film and Politics of the Third World,* and *Questions of Third Cinema,* edited by Jim Pines and Paul Willemen—that foreground African cinema as one of the important examples in this domain. In addition, there are books and articles that attempt to place African cinema in a diasporic context, such as *Black Frames: Critical Perspectives on Black Independent Cinema,* edited by Mbye B. Cham and Claire Andrade-Watkins. Also, issues of colonialism, postcolonialism, and identity have attained much-needed theoretical attention in the works of Anthony Appiah, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, and V. F. Mudimbye.

Diawara's book fits neatly in with the above-mentioned texts in that it defines African cinema from a culturally specific perspective that forces the reader to confront the complex social, political, and historical circumstances that emanate from this Africanized aesthetic. As debates around the concept of "nation" reverberate throughout cultural studies, Diawara's book suggests that national identity in Africa is inevitably tied into questions of cultural production. In this regard, Diawara is at his best when differentiating between Anglophone, Francophone, and Lusophone cinema throughout the various regions of Africa. These differences reference their previously colonized state of existence and at the same time comment on the way in which the differences affect cinematic production in contemporary society. For instance, with respect to cinema, Diawara argues that British colonialism was more concerned with a straightforward capitalist engagement, while the French colonists were more interested in culturally assimilating their subjects. Not only do situations like this defy dominant perceptions of Africa as mono-

lithic, but they also demonstrate the importance of history in defining national identity.

Diawara goes on to place the history of African cinema in a larger context of cinematic movements throughout the world, seeing the formation of the Fedération Panafricaine des Cinéastes (FEPACI) in 1969 as an event which foregrounded the potential use of film as a cultural arm of political articulation. In its focus on African unity and "the total liberation of Africa," (45) this filmic movement assumed more of a political posture than an artistic one. Unlike the French New Wave or Italian neorealism, FEPACI was less interested in "deconstructing traditional film narratives" than in using cinema as its cultural means to a revolutionary end. In light of the ideological context, Diawara states that "FEPACI, as a Pan-Africanist movement, worked to help individual countries gain control over the channels of distribution, exhibition, and sometimes even production." (46)

In addition to FEPACI, Diawara describes the importance of the Festival Panafricain du Cinéma de Ouagadougou (FESPACO) as a vehicle in furthering the exhibition of African cinema at a mass level. The biannual film festival has become a primary space for the presentation of African film and now draws a global audience to its promotion of African cinema as a contemporary component of cultural production. Diawara sees FESPACO as not only a vehicle for the exhibition of films from a Pan-African perspective, but also as a grand opportunity for the integration of social and political issues relevant to Africa specifically and Third World countries in general. Diawara cites the 1985 festival as a place where Angolan director Ruy Duarte de Carvalho, in his film *Nelisita,* could mix mythology with current events and ultimately teach viewers, in a very practical sense, how to survive famine. This combination of myth and reality work in opposition to "what would have been a purely cathartic and escapist film in a consumer-oriented Western cinema." (136) Thus, FESPACO is simultaneously a festival that extends the aesthetic practice of African cultural producers at a cinematic level and a liberating space that links intellectual concerns with the practical realities of existence in a Third World context.

Having laid the necessary historical ground work throughout the book, Diawara concludes by focusing on contemporary African cinema. It is at this point that one can fully appreciate the contributions of film-makers such as Ousmane Sembène, Souleymane Cissé, and others as African cinema continues to transcend its national roots and become increasingly viable in discussions about non-Western cinematic forms. Using the 1989 FESPACO as an example, Diawara argues that African cinema has become extremely diversified, specifically in relation to thematic concerns. These changes in theme in turn produce a variety of visual narratives that clearly have taken African film to a more sophisticated cinematic level than before. In the process, the lines of argument on the contemporary function of African cinema seem to be articulated in a clearer fashion as well. Locating these thematic nuances in three specific areas—the return to precolonial African sources, the historical and ideological confrontation between Africa and Europe, and the trope of socialist realism—Diawara then demarcates the prevailing arguments that come about in response to this form of cinematic modernization. While many see these changes as a "sign of maturity" and the end of "polemical and loosely constructed contents at the expense of cinematic forms," (141) others see these thematic and ensuing visual changes as a valorizing of form over content in a manner quite consistent with Hollywood and European notions of cinema, as opposed to the more politically oriented tradition of African film. Nonetheless, the articulation of these sorts of cultural debates indicates a certain sophistication both in the films and film-makers, and in the film audience.

The importance of *African Cinema,* however, lies not only in these kinds of detailed historical analysis, but also in the space that this text now occupies in the academic worlds that it assumes. Diawara has made a strong case for the viability of studying non-Western film forms and has provided a fundamental text with which to do so. Scholars can no longer ignore the cultural significance of African cinema, nor African society for that matter, in attempting to define the current state of films studies as a discipline. Instead, serious scholars can now look to Diawara's book as another example of a marginalized voice finally being heard.

TODD BOYD

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BFI Classics

The Seventh Seal

By Melvyn Bragg

Greed

By Jonathan Rosenbaum

Rocco and His Brothers

By Sam Rohdie

42nd Street

By J. Hoberman

Brief Encounter

By Richard Dyer

Blackmail

By Tom Ryall

L'Atalante

By Marina Warner

In a Lonely Place

By Dana Polan

Series Editor: Edward Buscombe. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press/BFI, 1993/4. $9.95.

As output mounts in this interesting series (344 volumes to go at this counting), diversities of approach become yet more apparent. Every film is extensively credited. Except for *The Seventh Seal*, each sports a bibliography, however limited. All are footnoted (Hoberman implies his sources *passim*), and footnotes often disclose a writer's predilections: director interviews, period evidence of a film's reception, script analyses, studies of sexual roles. Editor Buscombe must be challenged, matching writer to film. The approaches run from heavy journalism to light academia.

Bragg's tack is quasi-autobiographical. As a youngster, he chanced on the eroticism of Harriet Andersson in *Summer with Monika* at an Oxford theater. He interviewed Bergman for "The South Bank Show," a program Bragg initiated. Material on *The Seventh Seal* is mostly descriptive-appreciative.

In heavy contrast, Rosenbaum's *Greed* is diligently researched, profiting especially from a published Belgian Cinémathèque script and from the Stroheim manuscript out of which it derived. A reader is struck not just by what the surviving film excised, but by an enormous amount of prologue that Stroheim added. About a quarter of the script takes place before McTeague shows up in San Francisco, the spot where Frank Norris's novel begins. A dramatic failure on release, much of *Greed*'s current status rests upon other directors' testimony, and Rosenbaum concludes with a series of citations running from *The Crowd* to *Mikey and Nicky*, all suggesting *Greed* as a self-acknowledged referent.

Rohdie contextualizes *Rocco* in fields of melodrama, opera, social history, political ideology, and film music. Each in its way found expression in Visconti's personal background and commitments. Extravagance and nostalgia serve purposes of political explication. Even if vulgar, *Rocco*'s outrage is intentional. Every member of the Parondi family positions on a continuum of social consciousness. Likening the five sections of *Rocco* to grand opera, Rohdie correlates musical instrumentation, theme, and genre to the film's visual intentions with remarkable insight.

At Warners, *42nd Street* emerged as a somewhat bowdlerized version of *Pretty Lady*, a cynical Broadway novel. Zanuck was successful in reviving Hollywood's moribund movie musical by wedding one to the tough-talk patina of gangsterism. Hoberman traces *42nd Street*'s production details, including a capsule biography of Busby Berkeley. Descriptively, he treads a thin line between underlining the film's camp and sharing his pleasure toward the innocent exposition.

Classic or not, films age. In phases of its career, *Brief Encounter* modeled British technique and performance, then shamefacedly assumed the sackcloth of scorned Gentility, and finally emerged a favorite among the English gay community. Having used the film in a variety of teaching contexts, Richard Dyer assumes two strategies. One is to question whether the Celia Johnson voiceover is believably feminine in a story produced, written, and directed by men. (He concludes that the narration is trustworthy.) Secondly, if the female roles are now so popularly interchangeable with gay men and if the sexual reticence registers today as anachronistic, to say the least, where does *Brief Encounter*'s resilience lie? Dyer seeks an answer in the culture's continuing power to dominate behavior by way of social convention and in tensions of divided loyalties, although those loyalties may be reexpressed through different values. Finally, there are those British distinctions between lack of expression and lack of feeling, conventions sometimes unmarked among other cultures. Dyer's questions foreground an issue that must be basic to a premise of the BFI series: How and why are the 360 "Film Classics" still accessible to a general audience?

Tom Ryall traces the history of British sound in which *Blackmail* played so great a part. He describes

Hitchcock's use of the Schüfftan process for the British Museum sequence and cites the customary moments ("knife," the scream, the jester painting). Often-seen films are likely to harbor less-remarked favorite places among enthusiasts, and I was sorry that no interest attended the music, presumably scored by Hubert Bath and Harry Stafford. After Anny Ondra stabs Cyril Ritchard in his studio apartment, Ritchard's piano rendition ("Miss Up to Date") reemerges in a deeply somber reorchestration. It's clearly "heard" by Ondra, and thus grounds all the expressionist subjectivity that follows, while at the same time cueing *Blackmail*'s audience to her state of mind.

Marina Warner views *L'Atalante* as a challenge foisted on Vigo, its script marked by stubbornly sentimental banality. Still a romance, Vigo's result retains as much sentimentality as the cats that people Michel Simon's cabin quarters. Vigo replaces sentiment with sensuality, and Warner distinguishes its different erotic faces: Dita Parlo's emergence from innocence, the lust of Jean Dasté, Simon's tastes and touches that are so uncontaminated by social norms. Warner integrates elements of the 1990 Gaumont restoration with the earlier version which most of us know, so that changes can be usefully marked. She thinks *L'Atalante* quite fully realized, a purposeful fragmentation, not an incompletion. I've always thought Jean's rage at Le père Jules to stem from envy, but that's not a reading here.

Dana Polan's careful, rewarding study of *In a Lonely Place* locates Ray's film in contexts of genres and plot formulas. The romance draws on screwball comedy, its violence on film noir. Illusion and reality are confounded by the actual relations between Ray and Gloria Grahame. The ambiguity of Bogart's casting as a screenwriter layers on further ambiguity about the writer's presumed talent or lack of talent. His background may constitute one rationale for his behavior. The last scripted scene of *In a Lonely Place* is contrasted with Ray's final, improvised version. An admirable study, although Leadbelly would have been bemused to discover himself a "rhythm and blues singer." (50)

JOHN FELL

■ John Fell is the author of *Film and the Narrative Tradition.*

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The Casablanca Man

The Cinema of Michael Curtiz

By James C. Robertson. New York: Routledge, 1993. $25.00.

Michael Curtiz directed musicals, farces, swashbucklers, costume pieces, spy pictures—everything. He was not an innovator, James Robertson concedes in his recent study, or an explorer of new technology or new themes. When a picture he directed was good, though, it was occasionally very good.

But were *Casablanca* (1942) and *Mildred Pierce* (1945) really Curtiz pictures? As Aljean Harmetz, Howard Koch, Thomas Schatz, and others have documented, *Casablanca* was the best of *Hollywood* (not *Curtiz*) cinema. Schatz argues further—and persuasively—that *Casablanca* was as much Wallis's as Curtiz's production, and that (as Robertson again concedes) Wallis wrote its memorable tag line: "Louis, this could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship."

The author of a fine study of motion picture regulation, *The Hidden Cinema: British Film Censorship in Action, 1913–1972* (1989), Robertson does not scrimp on praise for studio artisans. He also shows that Curtiz relied on the studio apparatus, from the research department to the casting office, to produce his pictures. Finally, though, Robertson bows to auteur theory. *Mandalay* (1933), he writes, was "an excellent example of Curtiz's ability to rise above humdrum material and, against studio resistance, bestow upon it a distinction it would not otherwise possess."

The Casablanca Man makes several contributions to film scholarship. Auditing the Curtiz legend, Robertson shows that a "feud" between Bette Davis and the director who consolidated her fame in *Kid Galahad* (1936) was no doubt Hollywood myth, and that Curtiz's "cattle driver" reputation was unearned. Using memoranda from the Warner Bros. collection at the University of Southern California, Robertson also shows that Curtiz's popular reputation for malaprops and other linguistic abuses was unmerited. Finally, Robertson's scrupulous research helps correct falsehoods about the studio system, and while he occasionally uses press-book fluff and hoary anecdotes—for example, the story that Curtiz and Mike Romanoff were arrested for indecent exposure on a hot day on location in Arizona—he also credits the source.

Untouched by theory, *The Casablanca Man* attends to ideology only when content and politics directly collide, for instance in *Mission to Moscow* (1943) or *Sons of Liberty* (1939). Robertson takes Curtiz at his word: he was apolitical. In one of the more interesting sentences in the book, however, the author compares the oppression

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of the Saxons in *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938) to the Nazi actions against the Jews.

Unfortunately, *The Casablanca Man* lacks the color and pace of even minor Curtiz. Though its final chapter ("Assessment") offers a thoughtful overview of Curtiz's career and an informed speculation on his place in film history, what goes before dulls the senses. And then he made this film, with this script, these stars, this production history, and this gross. And over, and over, and over. The nine paragraphs on *Mildred Pierce* have none of the force of Al LaValley's wonderful essay on the film in the Wisconsin edition of the script, a book that, oddly, like Sidney Rosenzweig's *Casablanca and Other Major Films of Michael Curtiz* (1982), Robertson does not include in his select bibliography.

However disappointing, *The Casablanca Man* suffices as an overview of the career of Michael Curtiz. However perversely, it may also prove its thesis: Michael Curtiz deserves more study than he has had.

LEONARD J. LEFF

■ Leonard J. Leff teaches at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater.

Catalogue Pathé des Années 1896 à 1914

By Henri Bousquet. Available from author, 31 avenue Maréchal Foch, 91440 Bures sur Yvette, France. 260 F.

Pathé 1900

Fragments d'une filmographie analytique du cinéma des premiers temps

By André Gaudreault. Québec, Canada: Presses de L'Université Laval. $49.00.

Each of these books in a sense is a progress report by a scholar of reputation on an ambitious research undertaking. Both are of more than routine interest to students of international film, both are in French, and both are concerned with Pathé Frères, incomparably the single most important influence in the development of the film narrative till Griffith began working at Biograph. Indeed, Pathé's *Le Médecin du château* (March 1908; U.S. release: *A Narrow Escape*, March 28, 1908), a suspense film with intercut parallel action à la *The Lonely Villa*—though the recovered print is incomplete, according to Barry Salt—can be seen as one of Griffith's starting points. Compiled partly from copyright records in the Bibliothèque Nationale and partly from trade papers and the company's sales catalogs, Bousquet's catalog will eventually run to four volumes, of which this is the second to be published. The *first* was the volume for the years 1907–1909; next to appear will be that for 1912–1914, and the last will cover the years 1896–1906. The films are ranged according to the numbers assigned them in the sales catalogs, which roughly follow the chronology of their making. Each film is identified by genre, personnel, length, place and date of release, and the sales catalog's description of it. Titles and personnel are indexed separately. Historians of our cinema will welcome it as a source for the pre-American credits of Albert Capellani, Louis Gasnier, and Emile Chautard.

Even more ambitious is the project represented by the Gaudreault text, which has an introduction by Eileen Bowser and David Francis. Called GRAF by its inventors, it is an impressive advance on the analytical method pioneered in the second volume of *Cinema 1900–1906* published by FIAF (Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film) in 1982. It effectively showcases the methodology of what is planned to be a catalogue raisonné of the extant films of all makers in the world's archives through 1907, though the present alphabetically ranged sample of 42 Pathé films and fragments made between 1900 and 1907 (of the 200-odd that have survived) seems to have been selected on the basis of their availability as viewing prints at the National Film Archive in London (one of the world's great collections, to be sure). The achievement of Gaudreault and his collaborators, who include Tom Gunning, Alain Lacasse, Paolo Cherchi Usai, Suzanne Richard, and Nathalie Leplongeon, is to have established a method of analytic description geared to the needs of working historians, archivists, and theoreticians alike. Each surviving print of a film is treated as an artifact with, for each of its shots, a frame enlargement, description of its action and framing plus notations on camera movement when it occurs (a method slightly abridged in the present volume, which, however, does list the other archives with prints); the length of the examined print is compared with the film's advertised length at the time of its release. It would be interesting indeed to see this kind of scrutiny applied to *Le Médicin du château*.

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Cinema of Solitude

A Critical Study of Mexican Film, 1967–1983

By Charles Ramírez Berg. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1992. $35.00 cloth; $13.95 paper.

In *Cinema of Solitude* Charles Ramírez Berg explores the changing representations of national cultural identity in Mexican cinema during a 16-year period of political and economic crisis. Paraphrasing a key thesis from Octavio Paz's seminal essay, "The Labyrinth of Solitude," Berg states in his introduction that, "since the late 1960s Mexico's sociopolitical center has not held, leaving its citizens isolated and abandoned; in recent Mexican films this is represented by a parade of characters lost in their solitude." (1–2) Applying aspects of Paz's essay to film production between 1967 and 1983, Berg presents an elaborate typology of Mexican cinema, tracing a variety of fascinating genres and subgenres that, as he argues, reflect political shifts and also monitor resistance to the regime. Thus Berg's objectives are to explore the interplay between the construction of cultural identity and state interventions in the shaping of the Mexican film industry as well as to understand how "the history of Mexican film might be viewed as a quest for a filmmaking form, a cinematic aesthetic that would appropriately express the Mexican experience." (3)

What is most impressive about this approach is that by detailing a series of narratives of national identity, skillfully blending examples from popular and art cinema, Berg is able to contextualize within political and cultural spheres more than 70 films, including important works by Paul Leduc, Jaime Humberto Hermosillo, and Arturo Ripstein, as well as films by lesser-known popular film-makers. This approach, akin to a Lévi-Straussian decoding of the ideological roots of a communal mythology, enables Berg to present a rich and detailed account of the changing nature of Mexican national cinema during a decisive period of its history.

Despite the apparent force of Berg's painstaking elaboration of this material, however, *Cinema of Solitude* is not without critical shortcomings. Perhaps the most conspicuous is its dependency upon Octavio Paz's work for its conceptual focus. The discourse on the Mexican national character that shaped "The Labyrinth of Solitude," distilled from the earlier writings of Samuel Ramos, has long been recognized as a pastiche of psychological and sociological concepts applied to a variety of presumed "national" stereotypes. In recent years, as the political crisis that forms the background of *Cinema of Solitude* has deepened, more than a few critics have derided the tradition of meditations on *Mexicanidad*, "Mexicanism," so closely identified with Paz, as a narrow, quasi-official cultural discourse. At the outset, Berg acknowledges some of these critiques, specifically the complaint that such a discourse is rooted in gender, race, and class bias, but he shows little inclination to retheorize the national in terms that might respond more directly to the particular situation of Mexican cinema. Rather, his approach seems implicitly aimed at reauthenticating the Paz thesis.

This process is most noticeable in Berg's organization of Mexican films of the period in question around eight chapters that rely heavily on Paz's visions of Mexican cultural stereotypes. Chapters grouped around "Women's Images," "Images of the Male," "The Indian Question," "Communities," and "Flights and Hopeful Departures" are part of a narrative taxonomy that, according to Berg, shapes the ideological scenario of Mexican national cinema. Because his methodology necessarily privileges the narrative aspect of most of the films he examines, his discussions tend to flatten Mexican cinema into a series of key plot lines. Indeed, in exploring their ideological coherence, he seldom broaches the larger questions of address, that is, the audience at which such narrative paradigms are directed. At various points he suggests an allegorical correlation between particular filmic narratives and political intertexts, but, again, offers no explanation for the impulse to such allegorical readings. The underlying issue of the way Mexican cinema works institutionally to interpellate its national subject is never considered.

In all fairness, Berg does not propose a theory of Mexican national cinema as much as an informed critical reading of a decisive period of Mexican film history. Yet, inevitably, a certain amount of theorization is called for in understanding the formation of the national in Mexican film. We can see this clearly in Berg's willingness to recognize the importance of Hollywood cinema as a catalyst to the formation of a national film style in Mexico; yet he resists acknowledging the potency of Hollywood as the critical "other" that shapes both the identity of Mexican film and its national audience.

By the time Berg approaches his discussion of the treatment of communities in Mexican film he has largely broken out of the tautological arguments produced by his reliance on the Paz thesis and argues for a new conceptualization of the national around an awareness of the dynamics of communities. In chapter 10, the treatment of an emerging cinema of political consciousness leads him to posit a number of questions related to the essence of the community: the relation of individuals to the state; the issues of affiliation and of the defining character of a community. This chapter contains an especially lucid discussion of the work of Chilean exile filmmaker Miguel Littín, which prompts Berg to interrogate

the dynamics of a Mexican political community in and through cinema. In his final chapter, "Lost in the Labyrinth," Berg returns to Paz's metaphor and concludes his study by acknowledging the new transnational technologies that have largely destabilized the national project of Mexican cinema.

Cinema of Solitude provides a series of detailed profiles of directors, actors, and narrative formulas and a stimulating if not always convincing discussion of the dynamic of national formation in Mexican cinema. A useful addition to the bibliography for specialists in film and Mexican studies, it is considerably more than a mere historical catalogue of recent films and for this Berg should be commended.

MARVIN D'LUGO

■ Marvin D'Lugo directs the Screen Studies Program at Clark University and writes frequently on Spanish-language cinema.

The Cinema's Third Machine

Writing on Film in Germany, 1907–1933

By Sabine Hake. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1993. $40.00.

One of the most intriguing developments in the discipline of film—in the areas of theory and history alike—has been the rise of studies on the history of writing on film. One thinks, for instance, of the ways Richard Abel's *French Film Theory and Criticism* (1988) pinpoints the growth of an idea of French film art in French film criticism, or the ways Bordwell-Staiger-Thompson's *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* (1985) finds the elaboration and codification of Hollywood style in trade publications, practical manuals, popular reviewing, and suchlike. Participating in the movement of today's cultural studies to investigate the ways in which the meaning of cultural objects comes to them from their contexts, such books examine how writing on film virtually produces the film object, gives it its industrial and social pertinence, and determines the limits within which populations will think about the art of cinema.

Sabine Hake's *The Cinema's Third Machine* is an important addition to the growing body of historical studies on the discourse around film. Borrowing her title from a suggestion of the late Christian Metz (for whom discourse about the cinema is as integral and unavoidable a mechanism in the framing of cinematic signification as are the mechanisms of film production and film consumption), Hake takes as her objects the new art of German film from the beginning of the century on *and* the writerly practices by which that art was from its first moments anticipated, figured, imaged, imagined. Hake notes that much of the early German criticism of film has not been translated, and she intends much of her analysis to have a purely informative role, patiently and rigorously excavating the positivities of a historical discourse.

But, beyond sheer information, her book also has pointed critical stakes. As in her previous book, on Ernst Lubitsch's early films and their critical reception, Hake here shows a particularly sharp insight into the functionings of rhetoric even at the level of special connotations in individual words in critical discourse. Just as she had noted how Lubitsch was enframed in critical reception by a vocabulary that spoke of him and his films as culinary delights, Hake offers in *The Cinema's Third Machine* a close analysis of critical language that reveals the regularity of underlying ideological premises. Take, for instance, her comments on the tropes of reformist discourse in the teens and twenties: "Watching a film, these descriptions suggest, can be as dangerous as alcoholism, drug addiction, or infectious diseases. Other writers resorted to military metaphors. . . . Here verbs like *flickering, flashing,* and *flaring* suggest a situation in which the viewing subject is under fire. . . . [W]ater metaphors treat [the cinema's] destructive and constructive potential. . . . Some reformers speculated about harnessing the energies that had been set free by the cinema, very much like an engineer would use water power as a source of energy." (30)

Where, say, Bordwell-Staiger-Thompson concentrate on the regularities of an industry's discourse in order to argue its effects on the regularities of a practice (classical Hollywood cinema) and, in so doing, for the most part bracket out questions of that discourse's role in the larger social context (of American politics and culture), Hake's concern is more frequently social and political. What, she asks, is the place of criticism in society? She suggests that answers are to be found by looking specifically both at what the criticism says about its artistic objects and at what it reveals by the very fact and act of saying—by the very fact that it can take on such roles as moral legislator, aesthetic judge, and so on. In Hake's own formulation, she is interested as much in the metadiscursive level of critical writing as in the content of criticism. For instance, that many humanists who had traditionally preoccupied themselves with literature came to concern themselves with film tells us not only something about their conception of film but also something about their conception of criticism—specifically,

the dynamics of a Mexican political community in and through cinema. In his final chapter, "Lost in the Labyrinth," Berg returns to Paz's metaphor and concludes his study by acknowledging the new transnational technologies that have largely destabilized the national project of Mexican cinema.

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Sabine Hake's *The Cinema's Third Machine* is an important addition to the growing body of historical studies on the discourse around film. Borrowing her title from a suggestion of the late Christian Metz (for whom discourse about the cinema is as integral and unavoidable a mechanism in the framing of cinematic signification as are the mechanisms of film production and film consumption), Hake takes as her objects the new art of German film from the beginning of the century on *and* the writerly practices by which that art was from its first moments anticipated, figured, imaged, imagined. Hake notes that much of the early German criticism of film has not been translated, and she intends much of her analysis to have a purely informative role, patiently and rigorously excavating the positivities of a historical discourse.

But, beyond sheer information, her book also has pointed critical stakes. As in her previous book, on Ernst Lubitsch's early films and their critical reception, Hake here shows a particularly sharp insight into the functionings of rhetoric even at the level of special connotations in individual words in critical discourse. Just as she had noted how Lubitsch was enframed in critical reception by a vocabulary that spoke of him and his films as culinary delights, Hake offers in *The Cinema's Third Machine* a close analysis of critical language that reveals the regularity of underlying ideological premises. Take, for instance, her comments on the tropes of reformist discourse in the teens and twenties: "Watching a film, these descriptions suggest, can be as dangerous as alcoholism, drug addiction, or infectious diseases. Other writers resorted to military metaphors. . . . Here verbs like *flickering, flashing,* and *flaring* suggest a situation in which the viewing subject is under fire. . . . [W]ater metaphors treat [the cinema's] destructive and constructive potential. . . . Some reformers speculated about harnessing the energies that had been set free by the cinema, very much like an engineer would use water power as a source of energy." (30)

Where, say, Bordwell-Staiger-Thompson concentrate on the regularities of an industry's discourse in order to argue its effects on the regularities of a practice (classical Hollywood cinema) and, in so doing, for the most part bracket out questions of that discourse's role in the larger social context (of American politics and culture), Hake's concern is more frequently social and political. What, she asks, is the place of criticism in society? She suggests that answers are to be found by looking specifically both at what the criticism says about its artistic objects and at what it reveals by the very fact and act of saying—by the very fact that it can take on such roles as moral legislator, aesthetic judge, and so on. In Hake's own formulation, she is interested as much in the metadiscursive level of critical writing as in the content of criticism. For instance, that many humanists who had traditionally preoccupied themselves with literature came to concern themselves with film tells us not only something about their conception of film but also something about their conception of criticism—specifically,

humanist criticism as a practice that had to adapt to new conditions and events of modernity. As Hake puts it, "Writing about the cinema provided a way of confronting the artistic challenges of the new medium, but it also forced the writers to address questions about their own social responsibilities, about the relationship between literature and the other arts, and about the future of mass culture and its standardized products." (62)

Like other histories of discourse on film, Hake's book deals with the proto-theoretical attitudes that can be constructed from even the most seemingly technical discourse in this or that trade journal. In fact, as she shows, many of the technical writings easily give in to large-scale pronouncements. Discussing, for instance, the spate of manuals of screenwriting that followed upon German cinema's concretization into an industry, Hake notes how many of the pragmatic guidelines in the books slide into odes to cinema's power. As Hake puts it, "The pervasive feeling of accomplishment spilled over into more critical discourses, with the result that practical information about film production often gave rise to the celebration of cinema as a new collective art, and that detailed suggestions about theater design culminated in tributes to its democratic internationalism." (21)

In the first part of the book, on writings on cinema in Wilhelmine Germany, Hake traces out the impact that the cinema had for four areas of critical reflection among writers: the nature of reform in industrial society (and of the role of art and popular culture in efforts at reform); the possibility for meaningful action in mass society and the potential for myths of nationhood to surmount the supposed corruptions of the masses; the status of literary art among the other arts and as a still possible source of value in a mechanized age; the function of film within modernity's new elaboration of a mobility of sight and a new cultivation of visual pleasure. The second half of the book (twice as long as the first) looks at Weimar criticism and ends with reevaluations of the specific contributions of Balázs, Kracauer, and Arnheim. But where histories of theory have often presented the works of these writers as integral and discrete expressions of each author's personal aesthetic, Hake's treatment resembles more an intellectual history in which the thinkers are reinscribed in their social context and where commonalities of concern receive priority over distinctions of personality.

Hake's pronounced desire to make the lineaments of an untranslated field of writing available to contemporary readers leads *The Cinema's Third Machine* to an intensity of detail which undoubtedly has greatest pertinence to the specialist in things German (there are times when the sheer amount of detail is overwhelming: in her desire to describe the full range of discursive options in early German criticism, Hake sometimes opts for a writing style that resembles cataloguing). But I imagine that the book would be of great profit to anyone interested in the history of film theory and criticism. Here, the book's values are threefold. First, even in its specialist detail linked to a localized context, Hake's study covers writers whom film study has found important beyond their original context (one thinks, for instance, of the ways Kracauer is currently an object of interest for the things he might help us understand about our modernity). Second, as I have tried to emphasize, Hake's book joins a growing body of works that stake out the patterns of film writing's history, and she contributes to that body's exciting promise of a fuller grasp of film writing's myriad operations. Finally, even as her book complements other such studies, Hake productively shows how a genealogy of criticism can work between the rhetorical—finding the functions of figures within the critical discourse—and the political—finding the investments of the specialized realm of film criticism in larger social theory—and can remind us of the ways in which theory and criticism's rhetoric is a very large part of its social praxis.

DANA POLAN

■ Dana Polan teaches at the University of Pittsburgh.

Creating the Couple

Love, Marriage, and Hollywood Performance

By Virginia Wright Wexman. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993. $49.95 cloth; $16.95 paper.

While the heterosexual couple has achieved center stage in commercial cinematic production, it has not yet done so in film scholarship, where it has remained curiously off-screen. It is to this puzzling absence that Virginia Wright Wexman addresses *Creating the Couple: Love, Marriage, and Hollywood Performance.* Obviously, it would be misleading to imply that the couple has been *entirely* ignored in film studies. Discussion of it has arisen, for example, in genre criticism. In examining the film noir, attention has been paid to the enigmatic femme fatale and the havoc she wreaks on her male paramour. In analyzing the woman's picture, consideration has been given to the love story and domestic melodrama—both of which entail an account of heterosexual dynamics. But in much of this writing, the couple has not been a primary focus. In Wexman's book it is, but

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she places her inquiry within a diptych frame—the other panel being an examination of Hollywood stardom and established modes of screen performance.

In a rich and well-researched introductory chapter, Wexman draws on the findings of a variety of theorists (Freud, Foucault, Habermas, Lévi-Strauss, Engels) to examine sociohistorical notions of romance. As part of that discussion, she contrasts various models: those that imagine marriage as a ritual to ensure class, ethnic, or economic solidarity; and those that conceive it as a means toward spiritual fulfillment. For Wexman, the cinema has had a central role in dramatizing and advancing the latter paradigm.

In the same chapter, she also argues for how the Hollywood star system has functioned in relation to the ideology of romance—often linking the actor's personal love life to his/her celluloid image. To make such theorizations concrete, Wexman assesses the career of Humphrey Bogart, highlighting the diverse nature of his on-screen trysts.

In the chapters that follow, Wexman sequentially considers various aspects of the intersection of screen performance and the articulation of fictional romance. In a section on "Star and Auteur," she contemplates the artistic collaboration of Lillian Gish and D. W. Griffith in relation to the director's conception of womanhood and patriarchal marriage. Particularly interesting is her interpretation of Griffith's famous "rescue montage" as driven by the logic of sexual difference, finding it a means of demonstrating how a "woman needs a male even if she herself believes otherwise." (45) In an insightful reading of *Way Down East* (1920), she places the film within the historical frame of the suffrage movement. As she notes: "[I]n an era dominated by women's struggle for independence, [the film] constructs a residual discourse around the body of its star to argue that women desperately need men to keep them secure within the traditional family." (63)

In the next chapter, Wexman focuses on the issue of genre—selecting the Western and John Wayne as her example. She argues that the Western advanced a particular vision of coupling—that of "dynastic marriage"—characterized by the generational inheritance of land. As part of this discourse, she considers the Western hero "an ideal candidate for dynastic marriage," but a figure who paradoxically remains alone. She also examines the implication of his liaisons with women "outside" the dynastic circle: Indians and Mexicans.

In a section on "The Love Goddess," Wexman tackles the paradigm of "companionate marriage"—probably the most popular one advanced by film in the contemporary age. According to this prototype, men and women are ostensibly "partners," but Wexman views this as an ideology that masks inherent imbalances in gender relations. For her, the status of the female star implies a contradiction: she has traditionally gained fame by embodying cultural stereotypes of woman as man's malleable helpmate; but as a powerful working woman, she has achieved success by being a figure of economic independence. Wexman finds this drama narrativized in the highly self-reflexive *Sunset Boulevard* (1950)—a work in which a male screenwriter rejects the attentions of the forceful ex-movie queen, Norma Desmond, for the love of a more passive woman. Especially interesting is Wexman's analysis of the discourse of writing in the film (as seen through the lens of sexual difference) and the transgression represented by Norma's assumption of the pen.

In a section on "Masculinity in Crisis," Wexman considers a cluster of related issues pertaining to the 1950s: changing views of manhood, shifting visions of courtship, favored types of male movie stars. In general, she argues that masculinity in that era was marked by a sense of the "neurotic": emotional confusion, irrationality, violence, and homoeroticism. She sees such actors as Marlon Brando, James Dean, and Montgomery Clift as embodying this conception—one that is realized on screen with performance styles associated with Method acting. Finally, through an analysis of *On the Waterfront* (1954), Wexman makes the case for how, while Brando's hero seems feminized in his relation with women (as registered in his limpid "Method slouch"), he ultimately achieves "potency" through a "brutally physical assertion of masculine privilege vis-à-vis women." (177). In her final chapter, Wexman considers contemporary models of romance that transcend couplehood. In each case, she links her discussion of a film not only to one of those models but to a particular brand of film acting. In discussing the adulterous and promiscuous unions in *Nashville* (1975), she posits an improvisational form of acting derived from Viola Spolin and the Second City Performance Group. In delineating the emotional violence and interracial tensions surrounding romance in *Do the Right Thing* (1989), Wexman finds intimations of Bertolt Brecht's epic theater.

As one of the first texts to centrally treat the subject of romance in the cinema, *Creating the Couple* makes a tremendous contribution to the field—by giving us a framework and a language for launching such an investigation. It is exceedingly well researched, drawing not only on relevant work within film studies but on an impressive array of texts in broader cultural studies—from treatises on marriage to studies of beauty culture and theories of contemporary acting. The book is also a model of clear writing; Wexman deals with a series of complex issues, but she explains them with a minimum of jargon and illustrates her theoretical assertions with copious cinematic examples.

While Wexman is careful to bracket her focus on heterosexuality (rather than advance it uncritically), the book might still have profited from a chapter on gay and lesbian couplehood—as its depiction is a trend in contemporary cinema. It would have been especially intriguing to determine whether such representations invoke the narrative and performance models honed in the mainstream cinema around traditional sexuality.

At times, one suspects that Wexman is trying to do too much in a single work. While in most chapters the issues of star system, acting style, and coupledom coalesce, in others they veer toward separate tracks. But, whether focused on the issue of romance or conceived more broadly, Wexman's insights on performance and sexual politics are consistently illuminating, resonant, and solidly researched.

LUCY FISCHER

■ Lucy Fischer teaches in the Film Studies Program at the University of Pittsburgh.

Dirty Looks

Women, Pornography, Power

Edited by Pamela Church Gibson and Roma Gibson. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press/BFI, 1993. $40.00 cloth; $18.95 paper.

The debate over pornography is not the only "conflict in feminism,"[1] but it is certainly one of the hottest. The 14 essays in *Dirty Looks: Women, Pornography, Power* take up positions on the anti-censorship side of the debate, but for a number of different reasons and from a variety of perspectives. Thus these essays range from those sympathetic to feminist critiques of pornography but opposed to strategies of regulation to those unabashedly celebratory of what their authors see as pornography's subversive and liberating potential.

Some of the essays explicitly take on feminist critiques of pornography and arguments for its regulation. For example, in her strategically placed (first in the collection after the introduction) "Does Pornography Cause Violence? The Search for Evidence," Lynne Segal reviews the empirical research on connections between pornography and violence against women, arguing that (1) violent imagery is rare in pornography (2) research on the connections between (even violent) pornography and violence against women is inconclusive at best, and (3) violence against and/or degrading representations of women saturate all kinds of discourses, not just the sexually explicit, and hence there is no reason to single out the latter for censorship or regulation. Consequently, she argues that regulatory measures would merely suppress sexual and erotic materials, affecting the ability of women to produce their *own* sexually explicit images or narratives and doing little to provide real remedies against men's violence.

Picking up on this last point, several essays focus on the implications of arguing against pornography or for its regulation in the current political climate of England and/or the United States. For example, in "Second Thoughts on *Hard Core:* American Obscenity Law and the Scapegoating of Deviance," Linda Williams argues that "Americans are experiencing a remarkable on/scenity [public discussion and representation] of sexuality," which both permits the representation of a wide range of sexualities once labeled deviant *and* provides the means to "a new form of scapegoating of which the tendency to blame pornography for a wide range of crimes is the most insistent example." (47) Tracing a shift in American obscenity law from a criterion of "explicitness" to one of "perversion," Williams argues that feminist attempts to regulate pornography may unwittingly contribute to the condemnation of sexualities which deviate from a certain type of heterosexual norm. Similarly, Jennifer Wicke concludes her review essay of several leftist and feminist books on pornography: "The charge of 'pornography' has again become a potent cultural weapon, and at this moment it is more crucial to support the potential for transgression and critique still inherent in pornography as an outlaw discourse, than obsessionally to pursue the hidden inner secret of the pornographic as violent or objectifying." (79)

Many of the essays in this volume take issue with the MacKinnon-Dworkin definition of pornography as the "graphic sexually explicit subordination of women through pictures and words,"[2] either by focusing on sexually explicit materials that don't depict women at all or by arguing that even heterosexual pornography is more complex than the above definition would suggest. Thus, for example, Laura Kipnis ("She-Male Fantasies and the Aesthetics of Pornography") analyzes transvestite (TV) pornography, where "The majority of bodies portrayed are male, a large number are even *fully clothed.* And while gender is certainly at issue, it doesn't follow any of the standard presumptions of how porn works and at whose expense. Yet this material is unproblematically classed, even criminalised in some areas, as pornographic." (125) On the other hand, Gertrud Koch ("The Body's Shadow Realm") argues that "pornography is less an expression of prevailing male sexual *practice* than an expression of its defi-

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ciency" (39) in its constant attempts to allay castration anxiety and induce the impression of phallic omnipotence. Mainstream pornography, therefore, in her account, comes off as more pathetic than pernicious.

Other essays attempt to challenge the MacKinnon-Dworkin definition of pornography through discussions either by or about female artists who work with sexually explicit representations. For example, in "Look Back/ Talk Back," film-makers Bette Gordon and Karyn Kay argue " . . . we realise that we are still interested in pornography as an expression of women's sexual representation. We realise that, for us, pornography remains a compelling issue when used as intervention and as a challenge to a cultural system that has become anti-sex." (90) Similarly, photographer Grace Lau cites approvingly a review of her work which claims that she "attempts to reinstate pornography as a reputable means of exploration. Like [Miller and Durrell and Anais Nin], she uses a combination of humorous devices, odd juxtapositions and traditional narrative to render pornography harmless." (192) Liz Kotz ("Complicity: Women Artists Investigating Masculinity") champions the work with pornographic "found" materials of conceptual artist Lutz Bacher and film-maker Abigail Child, and Chris Straayer and Linda Williams applaud the boundary-confounding texts of pornographer/performance artist Annie Sprinkle. Both Straayer and Williams point to the often tenuous line dividing pornography and performance art (see, for example, Straayer's juxtaposition of a photo of Carolee Schneeman's *Interior Scroll* performance in 1975 with Sprinkle douching in preparation for her "public cervix announcement" in *Post-Post Porn Modernist* in 1991). Many of these essays make a similar point (for example, Maureen Turim in "The Erotic in Asian Cinema" or Lynda Nead's "'Above the pulp-line': The Cultural Significance of Erotic Art"), often demonstrating the snobbery and class-based assumptions informing such distinctions (Kipnis, again in "She-Male Fantasies" and Jennifer Wicke in "Through a Gaze Darkly: Pornography's Academic Market").

I approached this volume as a sympathetic rather than resisting reader, and my position against the censorship or regulation of pornography hasn't changed. Many of the arguments made by this anthology's contributors, described above, are persuasive and compelling. Others, however, seem to me more problematic.

For example, the fact that so few of these essays focus on typical heterosexual pornography produced by and for men might be cited as one of its strengths, opening up the definition of pornography and allowing for the possibility of its appropriation and transformation by women and other groups whose sexuality has been repressed or censured. On the other hand, skeptical feminist readers might fail to be convinced, since few essays discuss precisely the kind of pornography that worries them in the first place.

And what happens when these writers do directly address the concerns of anti-pornography feminists? Several of these essays dismiss the idea that pornography *causes* violence to women, in any direct or behavioral sense, and I think rightly so. But that doesn't seem to me cause for celebration, or, for arguing, as Carol Clover does in her introduction to the anthology, that these essays "share the conviction that to make sexually explicit material take the fall for, say, the battery of women on Super Bowl Sunday is simply and terribly beside the point." (4) Reductive, perhaps, but is it truly "beside the point"? I'm not particularly comforted, for example, that certain researchers have concluded that calloused attitudes to rape which may follow exposure to violent pornography may not so much be caused by the exposure to pornography as strengthened by it. (Segal, 13) Nor do I buy the argument that we should worry *more* about material which is not pornographic but contains images of violence against women. (Segal, 13) Isn't it the *eroticizing* of violence which is precisely at issue in feminist critiques?

Nor am I convinced by those who take a postmodern stance which valorizes ambiguity and "instability" and seems to dismiss any kind of feminist parody or critique of pornography as smug or hopelessly old-fashioned. For example, in her essay on Bacher and Child, Kotz describes Bacher's *Sex with Strangers (Obscenity. Misogyny. Desire)* (1986), in which the artist presented a series of images and captions from a 1970s porn book: "By blowing the images up on a gallery wall . . . but refusing to alter, reframe or comment on them in any other way, Bacher forces the viewer to confront a potential instability of responses: a constant slippage between positions of 'looking on' and identification, between psychic dispersal and fixity, and between feelings of pleasure and unease, attraction and repulsion." (109) Similarly, in her conclusion, she notes that in their use of "found" materials from pornography and popular culture both these artists participate in a wider tendency within contemporary feminist artistic practice:

> Yet I want to make a distinction, one which seems critical, between works which use such pop cultural or pornographic images as material, as the surface for yet another critical reading—a strategy which seems all about reassuring the viewer in her own superiority and distance—and works which, like Bacher and Child's, appropriate these warped documents on a much more structural level, engaging with their mechanisms of entrapment and probing the notoriously restless operations of desire and identification. (117)

I thought such a strategy was "about" demonstrating the ways such materials contribute to phallocentric constructions of desire, a project which, unfortunately, is not yet passé. And although I agree with Kotz that an exploration of feminine fascination and complicity with pornographic images is both interesting and worthwhile, it's not clear to me how works which "refuse to alter, reframe, or comment" "force" the viewer (which viewer?) to do anything,[3] and the opposition between and valorization of such works over "the clarity and authority of a more avowedly critical art" (117) seems unproductive and premature at best.

For me, the most successful essays in this collection are those which take seriously Laura Kipnis's argument "for regarding pornography (when we regard it theoretically) *as* we do artistic production rather than as discursively distinct, and for applying the same degree of critical, interpretive acumen to it," (138) and which discuss sexually explicit representations within specific contexts which render strictly liberating readings problematic. Maureen Turim, for example, discusses the prevalent use of erotic imagery in various Asian cinemas since the mid-60s in the context of *both* traditions of restraint in the depiction of sexuality which support readings of such imagery as expressions of political rebellion *and* configurations of national conquest, violence, and sexuality which make such readings only part of the story. Similarly, Anne McClintock ("Maid to Order: Commercial S/M and Gender Power") does a careful reading of the *meaning* of the recurrent motifs and fetishes of commercial consensual S/M (rituals of domesticity, the dirt fetish, babyism, for example) from a feminist perspective which appreciates the theatricality of S/M's subversion of current gender hierarchies and also sees its limits, in terms of both its dangers ("To recognise the theatrical aspect of S/M does not diminish the risks that may be involved" [227]) and its political effectiveness.

In an essay on the debate over pornography within feminism,[4] Carla Freccero makes the important point that any feminists who engage in this debate unfortunately inherit the baggage of nonfeminist positions which have historically framed the question—in this case moral absolutism and civil libertarianism. Neither position specifically addresses the interests of women as a political category, and each produces contradictions in its intersection with feminist analysis. The best essays in *Dirty Looks* challenge us to move beyond traditional ways of framing the question, and push us to consider new ways of addressing our concerns about the relationship between sexuality, power, and representation.

DIANE WALDMAN

■ Diane Waldman teaches at the University of Denver.

Notes

1. For a discussion of this conflict and others, see, for example, *Conflicts in Feminism,* Marianne Hirsch and Evelyn Fox Keller (eds.), (New York: Routledge, 1990).
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3. This viewer appears to be the ideal viewer constructed by the text, surprising since elsewhere in her essay Kotz notes both a presumed female viewer and a very specific *gendered* response by actual viewers to another of Bacher's pieces, *Men in Love.*
4. "Notes of a Post-Sex Wars Theorizer," *Conflicts in Feminism,* pp. 305–25.

Eisenstein, Cinema, and History

By James Goodwin. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993. $44.95 cloth; $16.95 paper.

Eisenstein, Cinema, and History is an engagingly written and comprehensive overview of Eisenstein's work in film which provides important elements of the political, cultural, and ideological background necessary for a full understanding of this complex film artist's contributions to art and culture. James Goodwin's textual analysis of films, relating Eisenstein's thematic aims to his stylistic strategies, is also very illuminating. The book's central thesis is that "Marxism is essential, not circumstantial, to Eisenstein's imagination and to the representation of history in his cinema."

Two opening chapters explain central concepts of Marxist critique, dialectics, and historiography, and describe Eisenstein's early career as a political cartoonist and as a theatrical designer and director. Goodwin then treats Eisenstein's work in theater, cinema, and film theory for the most part chronologically, with chapters devoted to each of the director's films—*Strike* (1925), *Battleship Potemkin* (1926), *October* (1928), *The Old and the New* (1929), *Alexander Nevsky* (1938), and *Ivan the Terrible*—Parts I (1944), II (1946), and the unfinished Part III. Two intermediary chapters deal with Eisenstein's unrealized film projects and his uncompleted films of the 1930s, *Que Viva Mexico!* (1930-32) and *Bezhin Meadow* (1935-37). The conclusion turns to

I thought such a strategy was "about" demonstrating the ways such materials contribute to phallocentric constructions of desire, a project which, unfortunately, is not yet passé. And although I agree with Kotz that an exploration of feminine fascination and complicity with pornographic images is both interesting and worthwhile, it's not clear to me how works which "refuse to alter, reframe, or comment" "force" the viewer (which viewer?) to do anything,[3] and the opposition between and valorization of such works over "the clarity and authority of a more avowedly critical art" (117) seems unproductive and premature at best.

For me, the most successful essays in this collection are those which take seriously Laura Kipnis's argument "for regarding pornography (when we regard it theoretically) *as* we do artistic production rather than as discursively distinct, and for applying the same degree of critical, interpretive acumen to it," (138) and which discuss sexually explicit representations within specific contexts which render strictly liberating readings problematic. Maureen Turim, for example, discusses the prevalent use of erotic imagery in various Asian cinemas since the mid-60s in the context of *both* traditions of restraint in the depiction of sexuality which support readings of such imagery as expressions of political rebellion *and* configurations of national conquest, violence, and sexuality which make such readings only part of the story. Similarly, Anne McClintock ("Maid to Order: Commercial S/M and Gender Power") does a careful reading of the *meaning* of the recurrent motifs and fetishes of commercial consensual S/M (rituals of domesticity, the dirt fetish, babyism, for example) from a feminist perspective which appreciates the theatricality of S/M's subversion of current gender hierarchies and also sees its limits, in terms of both its dangers ("To recognise the theatrical aspect of S/M does not diminish the risks that may be involved" [227]) and its political effectiveness.

In an essay on the debate over pornography within feminism,[4] Carla Freccero makes the important point that any feminists who engage in this debate unfortunately inherit the baggage of nonfeminist positions which have historically framed the question—in this case moral absolutism and civil libertarianism. Neither position specifically addresses the interests of women as a political category, and each produces contradictions in its intersection with feminist analysis. The best essays in *Dirty Looks* challenge us to move beyond traditional ways of framing the question, and push us to consider new ways of addressing our concerns about the relationship between sexuality, power, and representation.

DIANE WALDMAN

■ Diane Waldman teaches at the University of Denver.

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the theoretical reflections which preoccupied Eisenstein during the last years of his life, particularly in *Nonindifferent Nature.*

In creating this overview, Goodwin produces a smooth blend of material from a variety of previous studies of Eisenstein (among them books by Yon Barna, Jean Mitry, Leon Moussinac, and Kristin Thompson, and key articles and book chapters by David Bordwell, J. Dudley Andrew, Vance Kepley, Jr., Dana Polan, Roberta Reeder, Gilles Deleuze, and Noël Burch) and from Eisenstein's own comments and explanations, augmented by Goodwin's close analysis of a wide range of important sequences in the films. The political-historical background during the decades of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s is provided clearly and concisely, and the effects upon Soviet culture in general and the film industry in particular are accurately described.

Proceeding along with this overview is Goodwin's treatment of the relationship of Eisenstein's themes and aesthetic strategies to Marxist perspectives and historiography, to particular writings of Marx and Engels, and to the work of other leftist artists and theoreticians (Brecht, Grosz, Benjamin, Lukács) who were Eisenstein's contemporaries. These passages are interesting and illuminating, but also distorting in that they privilege a particular reading of Eisenstein's main intentions and goals. Although Goodwin does make references to Eisenstein's contributions to an anthropological and semiotic theory of artistic creation and viewer response, these passages are interspersed throughout the text in a way that obscures the fact that the functioning of art in culture generally (as opposed to a specifically or exclusively Marxist orientation to the question) is more properly the dominant motif in Eisenstein's creative life. In particular, Eisenstein's extensive writings over the last 15 years of his life are not examined in detail (references are made, more usually, to particular comments Eisenstein made about his own films). Might not this body of theory, read integrally, provide a different narrative of what is central to Eisenstein's imagination? Also, although parallels between Eisenstein's viewpoints and techniques and the major premises of the Russian Formalist School are sometimes drawn, Goodwin does not open the possibility that this also is a coherent and dominant strand in Eisenstein's thought. The work of major researchers on Eisenstein within Soviet semiotics (particularly V. V. Ivanov and Alexander Zholkovsky) and that of Anglo-American neo-Formalists are referred to only sparingly.

Let me illustrate the book's strengths and problems with a few examples. The thematic dimensions of Eisenstein's theater work and films in the 1920s do indeed advance Marxist critiques and perspectives on history, as Goodwin argues. The affective techniques that Eisenstein shared with much of the Russian avant-garde in the 1920s do foreground author-audience communication, and Goodwin shows quite convincingly that these devices are mobilized to critique capitalism and pre-Revolutionary society in *Strike* and *Battleship Potemkin.* He has some fine pieces of textual analysis here: the way he shows that the depiction of the working class is characterized by documentary realism (with visual auras which soften or monumentalize), while the capitalists and their lackeys are consistently reduced to cartoonish caricatures or mechanical images of inhuman brutality. But what does one make of Eisenstein's light treatment of the "King of the Underworld" (a Chaplin-like figure) and his minions, prostitutes and thieves who pop out of barrels like a bunch of circus clowns in order to participate merrily in a provocation? Might Eisenstein be expressing sympathy for this sadly manipulated lumpenproletariat or is he indulging his love of the clown show? Is this moment dominated by Marxist perspective or Formalist "making strange"?

For Goodwin, one of the important features distinguishing *Potemkin* from *Strike* is that in the former film the sailors organize and are therefore successful, whereas in *Strike* worker organization falls apart and leads to massacre and defeat. But, from a visual point of view, the compositions dedicated to conveying organization among the sailors of *Potemkin* and workers of *Strike* (directed linear motions which trace dynamic angles) are very similar (as is the "parallel-line" repression launched by the Tsarist forces). Interestingly, in *Strike* the marching workers are not distracted by the provocation organized by the lumpenproletariat, nor are they dispersed by rearing horses which threaten to trample them. Only massive force succeeds in annihilating them. Are the strategic failures of 1905 the main issue here or rather a compelling martyrdom (conveyed through the actual butchering of a stunned, sad-eyed cow) which calls out to the working class of 1925 to dedicate itself to the successful completion of the Revolution?

In discussing *October* and *The Old and the New,* Goodwin turns to Eisenstein's creation of a "spectacle of historical genesis and utopian potential," arguing that here "Eisenstein explores the processes of ideological signification by means other than that of pathos." Indeed, Eisenstein, in these two films, uses a great deal more of what he termed "intellectual montage" as a way of conveying abstract concepts and underscoring semantic parallels. But he hardly abandons pathos constructions; in his discussion of such constructions for embodying and conveying pathos in the volume *Nonindifferent Nature,* Eisenstein analyzes extensively the ways in which he created pathos in *The Old and the New.*

Goodwin's treatment of the period when Eisenstein's projects met with continual frustration because of

the emergence of Socialist Realism as an official doctrine is very strong, including excellent sections on the social and cultural politics of the Stalin period and the specific impact on the film industry. This is also the period when Eisenstein dedicated himself increasingly to the modeling of "inner speech" (the structure of thought according to his contemporary Lev Vygotsky) and to problems of "vertical montage" (the simultaneous interaction of audio and visual motifs).

In discussing *Alexander Nevsky* and *Ivan the Terrible,* Goodwin asserts that Eisenstein shifted from Marx's dynamic view of dialectics as a description of *social* phenomena to Engel's more universalist view in his *Dialectics of Nature,* wherein not only human history but nature itself is subject to dialectical laws. Goodwin takes Eisenstein's citations of Engels at face value, but one should also admit the possibility that such an acceptable "scientific" philosophical grounding provided a cover for Eisenstein to pursue his own abiding concerns with the interplay between the thematic/logical and the image/sensual aspects of artistic communication as mirroring the functions of the brain itself. Goodwin's contention that *Ivan the Terrible* inverts the themes of *Alexander Nevsky* while ostensibly echoing them is very cleverly argued. Ivan has the same lofty goals as Alexander, but his increasing isolation and paranoia, dominating Part II of the film, produce a brutality which undermines those goals. But Eisenstein's "subversive" portrayal of a Stalin-like autocracy encompasses contradictory tendencies which a purely political reading has difficulty capturing. For example, Eisenstein's work in conveying the great leader's charisma sensually through vertical montage constructions is extremely unMarxist, as Goodwin recognizes, but it is a brilliant, and one might say faithful, replication in film language of the emotional strands (Fatherland, religious worship) which contributed to the social psychology of the Stalin cult.

Whether Goodwin succeeds in proving the book's central thesis, that "Marxism is essential, not circumstantial, to Eisenstein's imagination and to the representation of history in his cinema," will ultimately still be a matter of some debate, but it isn't the author's effort or ingenuity which is lacking. Inevitably, though, Goodwin's determination to prove Eisenstein's commitment to Marxism deforms his account by downplaying the centrality of the broader artistic, semiotic, anthropological, and psychological dimensions of Eisenstein's experiments in film language.

HERBERT EAGLE

■ Herbert Eagle is the author of several short studies of Eisenstein's work and the editor of *Russian Formalist Film Theory.*

The Films of Roberto Rossellini

By Peter Bondanella. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993. $44.95 cloth; $13.95 paper.

A cautionary note in regard to this book: *caveat emptor.* The material in the book is largely adapted from Peter Bondanella's earlier work, *Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present.* However, it is still a good choice for the reader who is interested in a quick (lucid and logical) review of Roberto Rossellini's pivotal films, and it could be useful in a course on filmmakers. (Also, an unusual occurrence in critical writing, the notes are genuinely useful for learning more about the actual subject of the book.) Stressing thematic concerns as well as stylistic and structural elements, Bondanella, a prominent scholar of Italian film, literature, and culture, views the work of Rossellini and the neorealist film canon against the backdrop of the history of the Italian state and the history of Italian film. (The author also makes tantalizing references to Italian literature in the chronology in the back of the book and within the text itself which suggest the potential for interdisciplinary study even though he does not choose to undertake such an approach in this work.)

The main thrust of Bondanella's argument lies in the relatively detailed treatment of the seven individual films he identifies as seminal or representative works in Rossellini's career. Bondanella seeks to "de-politicize" the conventional reading of Rossellini's films by first establishing his professional and artistic connections to fascist cinema (and the interrelationship of prewar "fascist" cinema and postwar "neorealist" cinema) in a close analysis of *L'uomo della croce* (1943), the third film of his so-called fascist trilogy. Then, Bondanella discusses the "hybrid" style and content (combining tradition and innovation) of *Roma, città aperta* (1945), and the film's identification with the rise of Italian neorealism. He argues that a more truly "revolutionary" work, cinematically, than the critically and commercially successful *Roma, città aperta* is the film *Paisà* (1946), in that it rejects the traditional Hollywood mode of narrative even though it, too, adopts a hybrid methodology employing fictional and documentary techniques.

Bondanella goes on to recognize a transitional stage in Rossellini's career with *La macchina ammazzacattivi* (1948–1952), in which the director appears to be moving from social and economic issues to psychological problems. Significantly, the film also represents a crisis in neorealism in that the basic premise of the story revolves around the metacinematic notion of camera as weapon. Subsequently, in the films with Ingrid Bergman, in par-

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ticular *Viaggio in Italia* (1953), Bondanella points to a period of "psychological introspection," characterized, cinematically, by long takes rather than montage, and emotionally, by an "impassive attitude" rather than high drama. Although praised by the French critics of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, *Viaggio in Italia* disappointed the general public, who failed to be engaged by Rossellini's use of the structural device of "repetition with variation." Consequently, seeking renewed box-office success, Rossellini revisited neorealism in the film *Il generale della Rovere* (1959). As Bondanella notes, however, in its treatment of artifice the film provides a somewhat ironic "reconsideration of neorealism," with "a metacinematic twist."

Finally, unable to sustain commercial success, Rossellini turned away from making theatrical films to making films for state-supported television. In these "didactic" films, the film-maker pursues the "great man" theory of history along with the cinematic goal of "objectivity." In the most artistically successful of these films, *La prise de pouvoir par Louis XIV* (1966), he continues to play with the metacinematic concept of appearance vs. reality by presenting fashion as metaphor, "politics as pure spectacle" (in accord with Machiavelli's *The Prince*). Generally, in the films made for state television, Rossellini returns to the long takes and the impassive perspective of the Bergman films, but this time, in such films as *L'età di Cosimo de' Medici* (1972), his goal is the pursuit of "objective" knowledge rather than psychological insight and now he has a captive audience instead of "no shows" at the box office.

Bondanella repeatedly returns to the film-maker's commitment to the ideals of Christian humanism or, in other words, his "message" (even though Bondanella apparently concurs with Rossellini's rejection of the notion of "ideology"). Bondanella states that Rossellini's "artistic legacy is a moral and didactic object lesson, that the art of the cinema is ultimately a branch of the humanities and that great cinema has much to teach us about the meaning of the human condition."

A final word: I only wish that Bondanella, like so many writers of criticism today, did not feel it necessary to defend his point of view in advance against the anticipated attacks of those holding contrary (especially, politically correct) views. These defenses or apologies add nothing of meaning or sense to the understanding of film; they serve rather to fuel the flames of critical gossip, and add to the poisoned atmosphere of theoretical discontent. Like Rossellini, Bondanella has no cause to apologize.

BARBARA ODABASHIAN

■ Barbara Odabashian directs the Film Studies Minor at John Jay College–The City University of New York.

Future Visions

New Technologies of the Screen

Edited by Philip Hayward and Tana Wollen. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press/BFI, 1993. $49.95 cloth; $19.95 paper.

You'd have to be deaf and blind not to know that we're supposed to be on the verge of limitless entertainment potential. Everywhere, popular journalists proclaim the coming New World Order of ever slicker technology. But it's unclear what these new technologies are, what services they're supposed to provide, and which products we'll be expected to buy and why we should bother. The omission no doubt is deliberate: no one really knows.

Future Visions can't tell us either, for the simple reason that any one of the technologies covered in this collection of essays represents a field unto itself. But the book does provide a good introduction to some of the histories and applications of the newer technologies. The various authors make no pretense of providing a crash course on such diverse topics as HDTV, multimedia, and cyberspace. As the editors note in their introduction: "This anthology leaves unanswered as many questions as it raises. In compiling it our aim has been modest: to gather and disseminate information about new technologies for those whose engagement with older media leads them to expect changes."

Anyone familiar with these topics will no doubt feel frustrated that they aren't dealt with in more depth. But superficiality is the price of the anthology format. And it's preferable to over-reaching. For example, Tana Wollen, after a concise history of the IMAX process in "The Bigger the Better: From Cinemascope to IMAX" shifts gears in the essay's penultimate paragraph in order to tack on a political evaluation of the system: "Through the corporate sources of their funding and commissions and through their filmic strategies IMAX films align our gaze with the conquerors' omniscient view, while their impact positions us as an almost victimised audience." Coming unprepared by an otherwise neutrally informative essay, this passage reads less as an insight than as an effort to paint IMAX in the familiar guilty colors of bourgeois-patriarchal-imperialism before anyone has a chance to say otherwise.

There are other, minor lapses. Jean-Luc Renaud and Timothy Binkley offer contradictory assertions about the future of film in video production (Renaud: yes; Binkley: no). Robin Baker erroneously describes *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* as a watershed in the use of computers in film (computer use in the production was mini-

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mal). And one regrets that the ontological and epistemological issues which the editors raise in their introduction tend to get lost in most of the essays. Sally Pryor and Jill Scott's "Virtual Reality: Beyond Cartesian Space" engages these questions most consistently, but the thoughtfulness of the essay is marred by its mannered presentation.

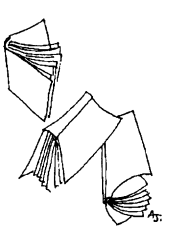
Binkley's "Refiguring Culture," despite somewhat starchy prose, presents a good introduction to the difference between digital and analog reproduction, especially as they affect questions of presence and materiality. Frank Rickett's "Multimedia," while hampered by restriction to a British context, provides a thoughtful look at that field's development. The most refreshing essay is Philip Hayward's "Situating Cyberspace: The Popularisation of Virtual Reality," which throws a much-deserved bucket of water on the millenarian pretensions of "VR" gurus like Jaron Lanier and Timothy Leary:

> While cyberspace may be significantly different from previous cultural media, its programmes, virtual realities and user experiences are just as firmly rooted in contemporary capitalism as any other form of contemporary culture. Those who have promoted it as "revolutionary" have neglected to consider the possibilities of transcending established cultural forms and conventions with technologies and cultural practices originated from within that selfsame culture. (201)

It is in the context of that cultural flux that we should place both these technologies and the anthology itself. Useful as these essays are, one cannot help thinking that in five years we will ask, "Did we really think that?" And in ten years, most of the technological references will probably require explanatory footnotes. Remember the 8-track?

CHARLES SHIRO TASHIRO

■ Charles Shiro Tashiro is an adjunct professor in the School of Cinema-Television at the University of Southern California.



J. Arthur Rank and the British Film Industry

By Geoffrey Macnab. New York: Routledge, 1993. $49.95.

In April 1946, when it held its first, grandly styled "World Film Convention" in London, the Rank Organisation was gigantic even by Hollywood standards. It could boast five studios, two newsreels, a large number of production companies making everything from feature films to cartoons, and close to 650 cinemas in Britain. Dominating the proceedings, and clearly at the apex of power, stood J. Arthur Rank, the most unlikely savior of the British film industry that one could ever dream of.

When he entered the industry in 1933, Rank was a rich, middle-aged flour miller from Yorkshire. He was also a gentleman farmer and a devout Methodist who taught Sunday school in his spare time. It was his Christian piety, in fact, which sparked off his movie career. Starting with the production of films for church showings under the banner of the Religious Film Society, he quickly branched out into every phase of the business. Soon he was the major share owner of a distribution company, and when he bought into the giant exhibition circuits of Odeon and Gaumont British in 1941, he had unequivocally become the most powerful man in the British film industry.

Strangely enough, while there are biographies galore of Michael Balcon, David Puttnam, and other British producers who have tried to fight Hollywood and carve out a national British cinema against enormous odds, Rank has been largely ignored. It could be because of the difficulties of measuring a man who always insisted that he was guided by God and that every decision was taken in consultation with the Almighty. It could also be that he always seemed so dull, and that his sometime rival, that flamboyant Jewish emigre Alexander Korda, offered much more interesting coverage.

Whatever the reason, this enormous gap in film scholarship has now been rectified by Geoffrey Macnab's wonderfully entertaining, readable, and scholarly assessment of Rank and his effect on the British film industry in the forties and early fifties. Built on very thorough research and supplemented by extremely vivid interviews, the book shows us the true worth of one of the most influential figures in British film history.

There have always been two assessments of Rank. The first, and popular left-wing view, sees him as Mr. Moneybags, the arch monopolist only interested in profits, who tried to make poor imitations of American movies and sacrificed home-grown talent in consequence. The rival view, and the one sponsored by Macnab, sees

mal). And one regrets that the ontological and epistemological issues which the editors raise in their introduction tend to get lost in most of the essays. Sally Pryor and Jill Scott's "Virtual Reality: Beyond Cartesian Space" engages these questions most consistently, but the thoughtfulness of the essay is marred by its mannered presentation.

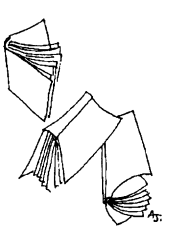
Binkley's "Refiguring Culture," despite somewhat starchy prose, presents a good introduction to the difference between digital and analog reproduction, especially as they affect questions of presence and materiality. Frank Rickett's "Multimedia," while hampered by restriction to a British context, provides a thoughtful look at that field's development. The most refreshing essay is Philip Hayward's "Situating Cyberspace: The Popularisation of Virtual Reality," which throws a much-deserved bucket of water on the millenarian pretensions of "VR" gurus like Jaron Lanier and Timothy Leary:

> While cyberspace may be significantly different from previous cultural media, its programmes, virtual realities and user experiences are just as firmly rooted in contemporary capitalism as any other form of contemporary culture. Those who have promoted it as "revolutionary" have neglected to consider the possibilities of transcending established cultural forms and conventions with technologies and cultural practices originated from within that selfsame culture. (201)

It is in the context of that cultural flux that we should place both these technologies and the anthology itself. Useful as these essays are, one cannot help thinking that in five years we will ask, "Did we really think that?" And in ten years, most of the technological references will probably require explanatory footnotes. Remember the 8-track?

CHARLES SHIRO TASHIRO

■ Charles Shiro Tashiro is an adjunct professor in the School of Cinema-Television at the University of Southern California.



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him as the guiding force behind the "golden era" of British films in the mid to late forties. It was during this period that Rank financed movies such as *Oliver Twist*, *Black Narcissus*, *The Red Shoes*, and *Brief Encounter*—films that generally reflected credit on all involved.

Certainly many of Rank's actions were highly altruistic and of great benefit to the industry. His commitment to research and innovation in the 1940s was unimpeachable, though they promised nothing but financial loss in the short term. He set up a "B" feature training studio, a charm school for training stars, and even attempted to set up an animation department under David Hand to rival Disney. And venturing into documentaries, certainly not a field for the get-rich-quick, he established the monthly series "This Modern Age," which ran from 1946 to 1950 and rivaled "The March of Time." But Rank's recurring tragedy was that while he had the courage and vision to sponsor such projects, lack of money and lack of faith would often cause him to abandon the schemes before they came to fruition.

When Rank bought into the production arm of Gaumont British in 1941 his pronouncements made people believe the messiah had come, and a humble one at that. He confessed an ignorance of film-making, and saw his main role as supplying financial support to creative film-makers so that they could get on with the job. The favored group was Independent Film Producers Ltd., which contained luminaries such as David Lean, Frank Lauder, and Sydney Gilliat, and also Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger. But while Rank's sponsorship engendered films like *Great Expectations* and *The Red Shoes*, it also produced clunkers like Gabriel Pascal's *Caesar and Cleopatra*.

The problem with Rank's attitude to the IFP was that it favored the few at the expense of the many. Rank's rationale was that with the IFP films, and with the help of United and Universal Studios, he could finally break into the American film market, the dream of English producers from Korda onward. The pursuit of this dream, very well delineated in the section "Tilting at the World Market," provides possibly the most interesting part of the book for American readers. Again and again Rank was told by U.S. distributors that British films had too much dialogue, were too slow, were incomprehensible, and that the actors were effeminate and the physical quality of the films inferior.

The reverse side of the issue is described in the chapter quaintly entitled "The Bogart or Bacon Debate." Here one sees how American films and British economic policy eventually put paid to any hopes of sustained quality productions in England. When the Labor government of 1947 tried to limit the entry of U.S. films to England the Americans declared an embargo. In answer, the British produced "quota quickies," which everyone hated. Finally the British caved in. The low-quality British quickies could simply not fill the gap, neither qualitatively nor numerically. When the Americans returned it was for good.

The crisis of 1947 illustrated the heart of Rank's dilemma. He had to play too many conflicting roles: as producer he wanted a strong British film industry, but as head of an exhibition chain he knew the greatest profits came from American films. When push came to shove the profit motive had to win.

The years 1947 to 1950 were years of conflicting governmental policies towards the film industry, mostly based on a desire to save dollars from leaving Britain. (Details of all the official approaches from an ad valorem tax to an entertainment tax are confusing, and it's to Macnab's credit that we move so easily through the maze of statistics and governmental statements.)

Against this background of austerity, crisis, uncertainty, and economic difficulty for the film industry one begins to see a different Rank emerge. The IFP group was dissolving. Production losses were accumulating, and as more and more experiments were being written off, Rank the pioneer was succeeded by Rank the balancer of budgets. Soon even that role was put aside. By the mid fifties Rank himself had almost entirely disappeared from the film scene, his place in the industry being taken over by his chief accountant, John Davis.

Though Rank himself fades into the twilight, through Macnab's book we can now see his achievements for what they were. For a while in the forties he dominated every sphere of British film culture. Without him the British film industry would have been in a far worse state, and might even have ceased to exist. Albeit briefly, he provided work for technicians, possibilities for experimentation, and gave a chosen few film-makers an unheard-of freedom in terms of creativity and budget. When all is said and done, that is quite a record for a simple devout Christian.

ALAN ROSENTHAL

■ Alan Rosenthal is a writer and film-maker who teaches at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Making Movies Black

The Hollywood Message Movie from World War II to the Civil Rights Era

By Thomas Cripps. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. $49.95 cloth; $18.95 paper.

All of us who have read Tom Cripps's previous explorations into the history of blacks in American cinema (*Slow Fade to Black* and *Black Film as Genre*) have eagerly awaited this second volume in the Oxford series. It does not disappoint. As usual, his scholarship is impeccable, his documentation detailed.

Cripps's thesis in *Making Movies Black* is that "conscience liberals" in Hollywood gradually developed a cinema which in many ways is remarkable for its prescience in anticipating the modern civil-rights movement. Conscience liberals are defined as a "liberal-Hollywood-black alliance" arising from wartime circumstances that "not only defined a new black presence in the nation's propaganda (if not always its behavior) but extended its ideology into postwar America."

The book is divided into nine chapters. The first, "Antebellum Hollywood," places Malcolm X (then young Malcolm Little) in a theater watching *Gone with the Wind* (recorded in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*) by way of ingeniously introducing a discussion of the gap still separating the races even when "conscience liberals" in Hollywood sought the opinion of African Americans regarding roles, searched for common ground or rapprochement, "muting or cutting scenes on which there was no compromise." Chapter 2, "Wendell [Willkie] and Walter [White] Go to Hollywood," follows the odyssey of White, then Executive Secretary of the NAACP, as he attempted to thread his way through the thickets of Hollywood in an effort to change the product, that is, to sensitize the film-makers to the importance of "granting 'citizenship' to black characters in the movies and providing them with an investment in the outcome of the war [WW II]." That changed product, the "war movie genre" explored in the next chapter, brought African Americans (usually one at a time) if not to the center of the frame, at least to a place in the platoon (*Bataan*, 1943) or a seat in the *Lifeboat* (1943).

A major contribution of *Making Movies Black* is its detailed description (in chapter 4) of Carlton Moss's role in the making of the army documentary *The Negro Soldier* (1944), which became, although unintended as such by the army, a "black-driven message of 'racial tolerance,'" and of the effect of its postwar release on civilian audiences. Cripps concludes: "[A] result of the war was that black ideas in Washington and Hollywood found their way into both documentary and commercial movies, thereby holding out hope for the idea . . . that movies mattered in persuasion." A short chapter, "Hollywood Wins," on the demise of race movies (all-black cast films made for segregated audiences) illustrates how African-American audience expectations changed as a result of war movies and the promise of better things to come.

Although "Documentary Film Culture and Postwar Liberal Momentum" (chapter 6) traces the influence of "conscience liberalism" on the making of such documentary films as *The Brotherhood of Man* (1946) and *The Quiet One* (1947), there is no suggestion that the documentary mode would become such an important part of African-American film (and video) culture generated by William Greaves and the "Black Journal" group in the post-civil-rights period. Considering Cripps's characteristic thoroughness, manifested in both the previous and the remaining chapters, "Thermidor," "Pot of Message" (instead of "Mess of Pottage"), and "Settling In, Settling For," I was surprised that not more attention was given to the issue of African-American women in the films of the forties and fifties. I'm not arguing for a p.c. representation—their absence was often "structured"—rather an analysis of, for example, the Dorothy Dandridge phenomenon and Hollywood's inability to deal with the antithesis of the desexed black woman.

One other nit: Although "Italian movies of the 1950s regressed into the same sort of stasis as American films had done," John Kitzmiller's postwar career in Italian as well as other European films is worth noting (he made more than two dozen films, mainly in Italy, but also in France, Germany, Yugoslavia) for its uniqueness if nothing else.

As a scholar, Cripps is generous with his time whether approached by colleagues or by students, and he willingly draws from his amazing mental storehouse to answer even the most arcane questions. When little or no attention was being paid to the role of African Americans in Hollywood or alternative cinema, Cripps was traveling this country and abroad, unearthing materials that have subsequently become part of the permanent record. His paper chase is fascinating to follow, its results remarkably illuminating.

PHYLLIS R. KLOTMAN

■ Phyllis R. Klotman is Director of the Black Film Center/Archive at Indiana University.

Memo from Darryl F. Zanuck

The Golden Years at Twentieth Century-Fox

Selected, edited, and annotated by Rudy Behlmer. New York: Grove Press, 1993. $22.95.

When Darryl F. Zanuck's ace screenwriter Phillip Dunne turned producer at Twentieth Century-Fox in early 1951, Zanuck gave him some paternalistic advice. "As a producer, you take on another dimension. You have got to stop being so damn polite and agreeable. You must stick up firmly for your point of view if you *really* believe you are right."

No one ever accused Zanuck of being polite and agreeable. He was one of the strongest personalities working in Hollywood's studio system. He had to be. Where most of the other majors organized into production units headed by supervisors, Zanuck remained the central executive in charge of all the A quality productions 20th Century Fox produced through the mid-1950s. Zanuck frequently believed he was right; the box-office figures and shelf of Academy Awards for his studio's films confirmed his judgment. Like another Nebraska native, Johnny Carson, Zanuck had a facility for sensing what enthralled middle America. He was the single most admired studio executive this side of Irving Thalberg, and Rudy Behlmer's new volume of Zanuck correspondence from 1935 (the advent of Zanuck's Twentieth Century Pictures) to 1955 (after Fox has innovated CinemaScope and Zanuck leaves) shows us why.

Sure, we find him here playing the ballsy, brash mogul type, telling Lewis Milestone to stick to directing because *Arch of Triumph* was "one of the worst pictures I have ever seen in my life." He repeatedly bawls out Jean Renoir for "too much background," too many dolly shots, too many camera angles, and too much improvising on the set on *Swamp Water*, and concludes, "I am behind you and I am going to see you through on the picture—but, by the same token, I expect you to play ball my way."

But we also find Zanuck carving scripts down into manageable form (eliminating the fourth subplot from the novel *Letter to Four Wives*) with an uncanny sense of balance. And he gauges his tone for the talent at hand: formal (when admonishing Hitchcock about the pacing of *Lifeboat*); amicable (when telling David O. Selznick, fishing for a star vehicle for Jennifer Jones, to keep his mitts off *The Snake Pit*); or diplomatic (when trying to suggest to John Ford that there may be just a bit too much singing in *How Green Was My Valley*). Even if he gave Zanuck a hard time, Ford, like many other Hollywood talents, considered Zanuck "head and shoulders above all other producers . . . a great cutter, a great film editor."

Behlmer is a great correspondence editor. Here, as in *Memo from David O. Selznick* and *Inside Warner Bros.*, he has carefully selected letters from nearly 50 collections that give us the thrill of reading archival documents and a very concrete sense of how Zanuck ran Fox. Behlmer has thoughtfully provided connecting material between letters, informing us whether Zanuck's scripting or casting recommendations were followed or not and generally giving us a sense of how well the films did.

Even with Behlmer's cutting and pruning of the memos, Zanuck was hardly Selznick's equal in memo-writing; no one in Hollywood was. But his muscular style leaves off the "I told you so" hauteur that often informed Selznick's writings (in fact, Zanuck readily blamed himself for the failure of a film).

Most admirable in this book, Behlmer gives us a sense of the breadth and depth of Zanuck's chores during this 20-year period. Here he is dealing with recalcitrant stars or stubborn directors, the Production Code Administration, the theater exhibitors, the New York office, and the agents. Even more, Behlmer strikes an elegant balance between examples of Zanuck's minute supervision of specific scripts and films (specifying the vivid characterizations of *The Maltese Falcon* as a model for *Laura*, for example), and instances where Zanuck saw fit to generalize—on subjects ranging from the delicacies of depicting Jews in Hollywood films to the art of the semi-documentary and to his clearly conservative brand of populist politics.

The two primary obsessions that emerge across this selection are Zanuck's concern for maintaining lively pacing in his films and for being in control of the production process. In the first instance, we discover that Ben Hecht was right: Zanuck's mentality "when he was at his height, was about that of a fourteen year old boy . . . that's the vivid age—the adventure, run away, play Indians, play gangsters age." Pacing was a battle Zanuck usually won. Control was another matter.

Early in the volume, Zanuck writes about the necessity for collaboration in film-making. He then lectures Loretta Young's lawyer for interfering in his relationship with the contract star. At the end of the book, Zanuck left Fox to work as an independent in Europe. Behlmer quotes him in 1960: "Actors have taken over Hollywood completely with their agents. They want approval of everything—script, stars, still pictures. The producer hasn't got a chance to exercise any authority! . . . What the hell, I'm not going to work for them!"

A future biographer may have cause to revise the gallant image of Zanuck that emerges here, much as Thomas Schatz and David Thomson recently inverted

the persona that arose from *Memo from David O. Selznick*. but, after tiresome retreads of Mel Gussow's 1971 *Don't Say Yes Until I Finish Talking*, Behlmer's *Memo from Darryl F. Zanuck* is another enlightening and engaging foray into the workings of Hollywood's studio system.

MATTHEW BERNSTEIN

■ Matthew Bernstein teaches at Emory University.

Screen Memories

The Hungarian Cinema of Márta Mészáros

By Catherine Portuges. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993. $35.00 cloth; $14.95 paper.

Márta Mészáros's work has received far less attention and acceptance than it deserves from feminist film scholars, busy lavishing their attention instead on less interesting avant-garde German and English women directors. Catherine Portuges begins her study of Mészáros by noting that while efforts to extend film studies beyond Western ethnocentrism have made headway with Third World and other national cinemas, little or no interest has been shown in the "substantial contributions to film of East-Central Europe or the 'Second World.'" That this neglect extends on the part of feminist film scholars to Mészáros seems particularly wrongminded, since the large claims Portuges makes for Mészáros are apt: "Her integrity of vision, consistent mastery of ambiguous and complex emotions, rigorous refusal of sentimentality and overstatement, together with an unfailing independence of spirit and action, exemplify the best qualities of international women's cinema."

Mészáros has made some 100 documentaries since she started in 1952, and she has directed many feature films since 1968, when she made *The Girl*, "the *first* feature film directed by a woman in the history of Hungarian cinema." She has directed for a longer time than all but one or two other women directors who are still working, with a full rich body of films to show for those decades, and five or six major films, which again sets her apart from all but a handful. She had the independence to take sizable emotional and aesthetic risks. She saw things about gender, and about relations between men and women, and women and women, in the 1970s when few were working that way. Her films were a revelation when they first came out and her best films still stand up, in their strength and complex suggestiveness, to repeated classroom viewings. Portuges shows that despite the realism tag with which some feminist film scholarship has dismissed Mészáros, her work resists such narrow and inappropriate labeling.

Portuges places all the director's work in a context of national political, cultural, and social issues. Since most of Mészáros's earlier films seemed strikingly less political than other Hungarian films released at the same time, one can question this approach, but it really lights up such themes as Mészáros's preoccupation with lies and truthfulness. Portuges rightly emphasizes the daring stances taken by Mészáros's heroines, "at odds with prevailing conventions of tradition and class," resisting "the overwhelming prescriptions of the patriarchal post-Stalinist state."

Though she was married to Hungarian director Miklós Jancsó for 14 years at the peak of his international renown in the 1960s, Mészáros took a completely different aesthetic route, and the marriage dissolved soon after she started making her own feature films. Portuges nicely points out the achievement even here of creating an autonomous career in the "tiny community of Hungarian, with its overlapping friendships and enmities." The book also conveys important information about projects impossible or difficult to see here. We learn about the making of *Travel Diary* (1989), which brought Mészáros back to Russia, where her sculptor father was sent to his death by Stalinism in the late 1930s, and where her mother also soon died, leaving the young child not only orphaned but enshrouded in the official lies and silence of the darkest political oppression. Portuges notes Mészáros's courage in returning, in her sixties, to the site of such traumatic early experiences under the eyes of her own cameras, and how Russian audiences reacted, exposed for the first time to her *Diary for My Children* and its depiction of the terrible Hungarian experience with Communism. We hear about such films as *On the Move*, starring Delphine Seyrig, which Portuges surmises is built around Mészáros's long-time love for Polish actor Jan Mowicki, and *Bye Bye Red Riding Hood*, a 1989 Canadian coproduction with what sounds like a psychological complexity far beyond that of a children's film. We also read Mészáros's poignant words at the time she made *Red Riding Hood*, about feeling free for once of political responsibility, free to luxuriate for once in the pure pleasure of fantasy. Hopefully all these films will at some point get a screening in the United States.

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Given that in the current film-studies climate direct clear prose is generally as frowned upon as a direct intellectual/aesthetic/emotive/judgmental response to films,

it may be unfair to complain that this book's opening chapter is no pleasure at all to read. Once past that, however, the book gives Mészáros the kind of serious, detailed examination her 40 years of film-making deserves—and, thankfully, in more lucid prose. One worries for Mészáros's future work, in view of a fragile eastern European economy and the loss of state subsidies for film. But this seems an excellent time to appreciate the films she has already given us, some of them among the best we have of women looking—with a very seeing female gaze—at their own complex world.

BARBARA QUART

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Screening the Male

Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema

Edited by Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark. New York: Routledge, 1993. $49.95 cloth; $15.95 paper.

The rumor that psychoanalysis and feminism are losing their dominant place in film theory is not substantiated by this collection. But while psychoanalytic terms are deployed unquestioningly in most of the essays, feminist ideas are usefully extended and the debate concerning gender and spectatorship is advanced in some of the best essays. All in all, *Screening the Male is* an important contribution to film theory.

In its own way, each of the 14 essays attempts to counterbalance the preoccupation in film theory with the way the "feminine" and females in Hollywood cinema are subject to the voyeuristic, fetishistic, and sadistic male gaze. It should come as no surprise that men and the "masculine" are often similarly represented. The cumulative effect of *Screening the Male,* however, is to forcefully demonstrate through readings of a wide variety of films the many and varying ways in which masculinity is offered up for spectator pleasures. Evidence of the book's success: you're left wondering how film theorists without a specific political agenda could ever have taken representations of the male for granted. As the editors' introduction concisely outlines, film theorists basically gave short shrift to the way Hollywood manufactured and distributed masculinity. They assumed that depictions of men were uniform, and that their role in a so-called phallocentric system did not warrant the amount of analysis devoted to spectacles of the female.

The jumping-off point in this corrective is a reprint of "Masculinity as Spectacle" (1983), Stephen Neale's response to Laura Mulvey's seminal essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975). Like all the articles in the book, Neale's seems lukewarm compared to Mulvey's, which not only has the virtues of clarity and a sharp political edge but is also a vigorous application of psychoanalytic theory containing compelling—if brief—readings of two Hitchcock films. The original essays are divided into four parts: "Star Turns," "Men in Women's Places," "Man to Man," and "Muscular Masculinities." As a rule, the more closely they attend to a particular film or set of films, the better they are. Some highlights include Peter Lehman's plausible account of a spectator's reaction to female rape-revenge films in "Don't Blame This On a Girl," and Helen Robbins' serious and revealing challenge to Mulvey in "Womb Envy in David Cronenberg's *The Fly* and *Dead Ringers.*"' To Chris Holmlund, the appeal of a queer reading of Stallone movies is that it makes it "easier to question, understand, and enjoy popular mainstream films." (216) This admirable goal retains the ludic element of the French theory film academics latched on to in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Two essays attempt to broaden the scope of the debate beyond gender to race. Robyn Wiegman criticizes the blindness of feminist theory to race issues while raising some interesting, though diffuse, questions. And in "The Buddy Politic," Cynthia J. Fuchs argues convincingly that teaming partners of different race in cop-buddy movies serves to efface anxiety about homosexuality.

At least some of the readings offered in the collection, including Gaylyn Studlar's on Valentino and Lucy Fischer's on James Cagney, are grounded in some interesting social and cultural history. But the truth of the majority of the arguments in *Screening the Male* ultimately depends on your tolerance for their Freudian and Lacanian roots. While frequently insightful when aimed at film-makers and filmic structure, narrative, and characters, psychoanalytic theory too often constructs a phantom spectator, and feminist theory a victim. The spectator and the female are both abused innocents, and you sense that what is described in Freud's influential essay "A Child Is Being Beaten" turns out to be more the experience of the theorist when wearing her theory hat than that of any subject on the screen or in the audience.

This gloss may be tendentious, and the merits of psychoanalysis for understanding film is a massive subject, but questions like "Is there a nonphallic human subjectivity?" (163) are simply unhelpful. To be fair to Ina Rae Harke, this is an aside (a parenthetical, in fact), yet the only definitions of "phallic" that could prompt it

it may be unfair to complain that this book's opening chapter is no pleasure at all to read. Once past that, however, the book gives Mészáros the kind of serious, detailed examination her 40 years of film-making deserves—and, thankfully, in more lucid prose. One worries for Mészáros's future work, in view of a fragile eastern European economy and the loss of state subsidies for film. But this seems an excellent time to appreciate the films she has already given us, some of them among the best we have of women looking—with a very seeing female gaze—at their own complex world.

BARBARA QUART

■ Barbara Quart teaches at the College of Staten Island and also writes for a variety of magazines.

Screening the Male

Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema

Edited by Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark. New York: Routledge, 1993. $49.95 cloth; $15.95 paper.

The rumor that psychoanalysis and feminism are losing their dominant place in film theory is not substantiated by this collection. But while psychoanalytic terms are deployed unquestioningly in most of the essays, feminist ideas are usefully extended and the debate concerning gender and spectatorship is advanced in some of the best essays. All in all, *Screening the Male is* an important contribution to film theory.

In its own way, each of the 14 essays attempts to counterbalance the preoccupation in film theory with the way the "feminine" and females in Hollywood cinema are subject to the voyeuristic, fetishistic, and sadistic male gaze. It should come as no surprise that men and the "masculine" are often similarly represented. The cumulative effect of *Screening the Male,* however, is to forcefully demonstrate through readings of a wide variety of films the many and varying ways in which masculinity is offered up for spectator pleasures. Evidence of the book's success: you're left wondering how film theorists without a specific political agenda could ever have taken representations of the male for granted. As the editors' introduction concisely outlines, film theorists basically gave short shrift to the way Hollywood manufactured and distributed masculinity. They assumed that depictions of men were uniform, and that their role in a so-called phallocentric system did not warrant the amount of analysis devoted to spectacles of the female.

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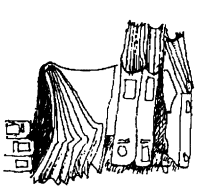
as a serious question are so general they cannot have any explanatory power. And this is true of many concepts and terms encountered in these essays. For instance, castration anxiety, to which there are 33 references in the index: it is one thing to suggest that a man is defensive about his masculinity, is fearful of somehow losing his penis, or is terrified of not measuring up, but it's another to suggest, as Mulvey does and some of the contributors assume, that every woman, let alone every woman's image projected on a movie screen, represents the threat of castration because she/it lacks a penis. This extremism may be found in Freud and Lacan, but it's farfetched nonetheless.

This is a well-edited, well-annotated collection that delivers on its promises. It will attract a wide range of readers, if only because of the fantastic cover, even though the uninitiated will get bored at times. I did feel I was reading one author, which testifies to the contributors' lack of style and individual voice. Despite the stylistic monotony, the achievement of *Screening the Male* is that it affirms the complexity of the male subject both on the screen and in the audience, thus undermining the notion that there is something to be identified as "orthodox masculine subjectivity." (1) The unassailable lesson about spectatorship is that while most mainstream films—although not David Cronenberg's, as Robbins shows—may try and give the "male viewer the asylum of untroubled identification with a powerful male subject," (145) they hardly, if ever, succeed. The way these essays challenge film theory's approach to gender in Hollywood cinema should lead to strong doubts about the tendency to speak of Hollywood as a monolithic "representation system." (47) This is a holdover from, among other things, semiotics and structuralism. Through an interrogation of gender, *Screening the Male* affirms that Hollywood cinema is not the homogeneous institution that many theoreticians appear to assume. Two sacred cows are thus turned into hamburger.

JOHN P. MCCARTHY

■ John P. McCarthy, a freelance writer in New York City, has written on film and philosophy for the *British Journal of Aesthetics* and the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism.*



Shades of Noir

A Reader

Edited by Joan Copjec. New York: Verso, 1993. $59.95 cloth; $18.95 paper.

In this Verso anthology, 11 uncommon scholars take us in search of a new goal—to extend vastly the boundaries of what we know today as film noir. Whereas previous works on this subject continued from the original vantage point suggested by French critics, and especially Raymond Borde and Étienne Chaumeton (*Panorama du film noir américain*, 1955), merely by expanding the definition of noir elements and naming more films representative of the arguable genre, *Shades of Noir*'s editor Joan Copjec states that the ten essays included here are not meant to be a "point-by-point consensus about what constitutes *film noir*. . . . Each essay takes up the issue from a different perspective. What unites all essays, however, is a strong sense of the importance of the genre and of the necessity of retheorizing it." Copjec finds two reasons for this refreshing new look: "the re-emergence of *film noir* in recent years" and "the uneasy sense that we never adequately defined it in the first place."

Disavowing the largely structuralist assumption of current film theory, Copjec argues that the key question has been answered: Why have audiences become sensible to the "nightmares" of film noir and its stories of violence? The book's essayists explore this question by examining the internal logic of selected films noirs and challenging fundamental assumptions we've accepted for almost 40 years.

The contributors find three different levels on which to operate. The question of "sensibility" explained by Copjec is the first. The second is also relatively clear: that it's no longer necessary to argue whether film noir is a genre, a style, or a body of works with common elements that represent an alternative definition. What's more important to understand is that elements of film noir were present in American and world cinema long before the 1940s. When the French told us what this reflection meant to them, they were finding film noir developing as a coherent genre in the United States after World War II, and scholars in various fields have accepted the political fears and "noncinematic social transformations" that defined the era. Therefore, the time period we have normally considered appropriate for noir, roughly between 1941 and 1958, is "arbitrary" (a concept Marc Vernet elucidates well in the first chapter, "*Film Noir* on the Edge of Doom") and no longer useful in dealing with the pervasive influence film noir still enjoys.

On the third level, the text's authors situate the perspectives of film noir within the lexicon of current film

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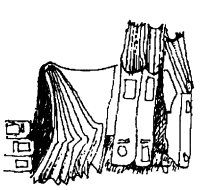

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theory. Here film noir vanishes as an exclusive, limited territory and becomes part of the landscape of film theory, adding to what has already been described as an often seismological terrain. To understand fully *Shades of Noir*'s own inner sensibilities, one must (a) be familiar with theorists in many fields to whom the text alludes (e.g., Lacan, Foucault, Kant, Descartes, Barthes, Hacking, Lefort, and the redoubtable Sigmund Freud; (b) be conversant with most of the classic films (*Dark Passage, Double Indemnity, The Big Sleep, The Lady in the Lake, The Blue Gardenia, The Maltese Falcon, Out of the Past, Raw Deal, The Secret Beyond the Door, Rear Window*), many of which are discussed at some length; (c) know a significant part of the underlying literary works that fueled the "hard-boiled" detective/crime school of noir (by Chandler, Hammett, Woolrich, Cain, in particular); and (d) have read most of the authors of scholarly film noir texts, whose theses *Shades of Noir*'s writers praise and debate simultaneously. (An index and bibliography would have been helpful.)

As a result of *Shades of Noir*'s pioneering efforts, the reader will be able to accommodate recent and current films into the perspective of noir because noir as a style can invest other genres with its unique elements and transform these works into new subgenres. For example, Fred Pfeil in "Home Fires Burning: Family *Noir*" looks at *Blue Velvet* and *Terminator 2* to "show how home and family are being destabilized" and "*noir*-ized." Slavoj Žižek, in "'The Thing That Thinks': The Kantian Background of the *Noir* Subject," recognizing that "reverberations of *film noir* motifs are easily discernible" in comedies, Westerns, political and social dramas, and other kinds of films, theorizes that when the elements of the detective film noir fuse with another genre (here the science fiction or occult, embodied by *Angel Heart* and *Blade Runner)*, the "'proper,' detective *film noir* . . . realizes its notion." Another highly relevant and interesting thesis is offered by Manthia Diawara ("*Noir* by Noirs: Toward a New Realism in Black Cinema"), who, by illustrating the noir facets of *A Rage in Harlem*, posits that the rage black people feel for whites is subverted. The hatred explodes black against black, as New York City's Harlem is a metaphor for a noir existence, an underground people suppressed by a society of higher power who live out the kind of isolation and paranoia so common in films noirs. In this case, Diawara correctly states, " . . . blackness is a fall from whiteness."

The essays I have not yet mentioned are equally absorbing. Fredric Jameson ("The Synoptic Chandler"), David Reid and Jayne L. Walker ("Strange Pursuit: Cornell Woolrich and the Abandoned City of the Forties"), and Joan Copjec ("The Phenomenal Nonphenomenal: Private Space in *Film Noir*," an eloquent reading of James Cain's *Double Indemnity*) advance our understanding of the "hard-boiled" detective noirs. Janet Bergstrom's "The Mystery of *The Blue Gardenia*" helps to clarify Fritz Lang's filmic style, his personal views of American society (including the role of women), and his belief in maintaining "contact" with his audience. Elizabeth Cowie's "*Film Noir* and Woman" examines in detail *Raw Deal* and *The Secret Beyond the Door* to illustrate that film noir means as much to women as men. The women are the real focus of these two films, and even when it appears that the male dominates the narrative structure, a closer reading finds that there is no noir theme, no motive of death, desire, or sexuality without the counterbalancing axis of the female insurgency. Finally, "Democracy's Turn: On Homeless *Noir*" by Dean MacCannell can be interpreted as a Marxist treatise about democracy subverted by capitalism, viewing the homeless as a noir element of "senile capitalism."

No easy bedtime reading, *Shades of Noir* is one of the most fascinating, perceptive, and important references on the study of films noirs, primarily because it explores new ground in a provocative, compelling, and convincing manner, and because it places film noir at the heart of current film theory both as an operative theory itself and as an instrument for understanding various facets of the many theories we've adapted from other fields to cinema studies, especially within the past ten years. I suggest that theorists, historians, critics, and scholars of film and liberal arts pass this complex but necessary text to beginning students in their fields. To digest *Shades of Noir*, these students will have to explore the vast landscape along with its 11 superb authors.

LOWELL HARRIS

■ Lowell Harris is in the Cinema Studies program at New York University.

Tele-Advising

Therapeutic Discourse in American Television

By Mimi White. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1992. $29.95 cloth; $10.95 paper.

Mimi White's *Tele-Advising* addresses the confessional mode of discourse in different types of television programming, ranging from the family comedy

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"Alf" to CBN's "The 700 Club," the dramatic series "Finder of Lost Loves" and "The Equalizer" to talk shows with an explicitly therapeutic premise such as "Good Sex! with Dr. Ruth Westheimer," game shows such as "The All New Dating Game," HSC (Home Shopping Club)—in short, any type of show which presupposes that a condition for participation is bound around confession. In delineating the dynamics and structures of these various shows, Ms. White attempts to demonstrate that the confessional mode facilitates the "institutional production of meaning" (19) in a postmodern culture defined by the "absence of a single master narrative." (21) Her proposed method of inquiry is psychoanalytic, but only in the sense that it takes as psychoanalytic the stratagem of generations of meaning referable to the creation of a "master narrative" (as, say, a psychoanalytic enterprise relies upon the creation of a coherent narrative uniting a patient's disparate experiences throughout intrapsychic time). Ms. White does not address the developmental premise of this type of confessional discourse, a modality of inquiry which would be more strikingly psychoanalytic. In point of fact, psychoanalysis appears primarily in the margins of this work.

Ms. White relies much more heavily upon Foucault, seeking in limited fashion to incorporate the philosopher's views on power and the generation of "truth" through confession. Yet even this reliance appears more specifically as a sort of paying homage to a current and fashionable theoretical "star" in order to confer more legitimacy upon her modality of inquiry. Discussions of Foucault are quite cursory, distilled to a few paragraphs.

With these limited theoretical considerations in mind, Ms. White goes on to illuminate the dynamics of modern confession as mediated by television, whether it be in the prime-time format of the dramatic series or more subtly in the pseudo-intimacies and sense of community created and fostered through shared experiences, confessionals, and enforced homage to the "star" of a program such as the host of HSC or Dr. Ruth. Ms. White is on much more solid ground when she confines herself to detailing structures and strategies. These strategies are seen as necessary to the perpetuation of power. Of all Ms. White's analyses, her dissection of HSC, CBN and the avowed therapy shows such as "Good Sex!" are the most incisive. In particular, her careful scrutiny of the ways in which power is both subtly and overtly conferred to the interlocutor is masterful, as well as highly entertaining reading in its own right. Less successful are her analyses of dramatic series, primarily because she essentially reworks the same ground. In addition, most of her analyses turn upon repetitious revisitations and distillations of cathartic moments such as the "key" to cure and recuperation—something that is certainly not new and merely an extension of popular notions of what therapy is all about. An intriguing approach would be to address the seamless quality of this assumption in its transfer from the "master" Hollywood narrative to that of the television melodrama or daytime soap opera, something which begs the question of mass-consumed realities as defined by mass-produced simulacra.

Ms. White's emphasis upon catharsis as the unquestioned modus operandi of therapy and, by extension, psychoanalysis, is a major weakness of the book, although she admits that the "therapeutic problematic is an overdetermined strategy." (21) The author seems to have fallen victim to the same popular notion of the cathartic cure that equates confession with release and exorcism. Without going into an extended debate about the religious overtones of such an emphasis, this is not the same thing at all as therapy. Furthermore, *advice* perpetuates the illusion of power; psychoanalytic and insight-oriented therapies do not, although they, too, challenge subjectivities and identities by emphasizing constructions of coherent narratives. Ms. White has a rather monolithic view of therapy and psychoanalysis, and what she describes does not approach therapeutic discourse. Her analyses belong more properly to a discussion of religious and consumer discourses. (Are they the same?)

Ms. White's conclusions again pay homage to Foucault, reiterating the main points of her introduction. Her thesis can best be represented by her assertion that the "position of authority and knowledge is not lost once and for all but subdivided and shared in provisional and variable ways among viewers . . . the position of confessor is subdivided and shared among a variety of speakers (and interlocutors) . . . television transforms ideas about the authenticity of one's own voice, especially in the singular first-person." (179)

By and large, I found this book interesting, informative, and in some sections compelling. I would have appreciated a little less in terms of examples and somewhat more actual theoretical applications; in a rather slim volume of almost two hundred pages, her conclusions are all of ten pages in length. Ms. White's book is, however, an interesting addition to studies of mass-media and communications strategies.

ILSA J. BICK, M.D.

■ Ilsa J. Bick, M.D., is a child and adolescent psychiatrist and writes on applied psychoanalysis and film.

You Tarzan

Masculinity, Movies, and Men

Edited by Pat Kirkham and Janet Thumin. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993. $39.95 cloth; $15.95 paper.

You Tarzan can be placed on the rapidly filling shelf of books exploring masculinity and film, alongside new studies by Susan Jeffords (*Hard Bodies*), Peter Lehman (*Running Scared*), Yvonne Tasker (*Spectacular Bodies*), Dennis Bingham (*Acting Male*), and collections edited by Constance Penley and Sharon Willis (*Male Trouble*), and Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark (*Screening the Male*). Insofar as this work challenges normative heterosexist narratives and images, it appears as a welcome addition to the expansive field of gender studies; but *You Tarzan* (which unfortunately suffers in comparison with these other volumes) also raises doubts about the "postfeminist" direction and value of some recent work on media representations of men and masculinity.

This anthology introduces an all-male lineup of (mostly British) contributors, supporting its female editors' belief "that it is important for men themselves to write about the construction and representation of the masculine in relation to their experience as masculine subjects." (11) Performed explicitly, self-critically, and without undue expectations of reward, this indeed seems a worthwhile project, though one still might wince at seeing women facilitate—like Jane helping the preverbal Apeman speak his name—the publication of material by and about men which so often ignores its implications for women. As even the editors note, such topics as rape and marriage are "hardly touched upon in this volume." (17) Overall, *You Tarzan* hardly forms a convincing challenge to Tania Modleski's argument, in *Feminism Without Women*, that recent developments in gender studies emphasizing masculinity have often proceeded through the exclusion of women and at the expense of feminism.

At first glance, this collection covers a broad scope, including essays on film stars (Rock Hudson, Clark Gable, Robert De Niro, Amitabh Bachchan), genres (the epic, horror, Tarzan films, Vietnam war films, 1950s sci-fi), and specific works (*Dead Poets Society, The Spanish Gardener, One Last Chance,* three versions of *The 39 Steps,* and *North Dallas Forty*). However, the premises and conclusions of the 14 essays are virtually uniform: unsurprisingly, the contributors continuously find masculinity "in crisis," though only a few clearly ask why this might be so, and very frequently masculinity is only discussed as a problem *for men,* who suffer as the victims of media images they cannot themselves resemble or hope to emulate. Modleski insightfully notes that "male power is actually consolidated through cycles of crisis and resolution" (*Feminism Without Women,* 7) and so the critical recognition of "male trouble" in popular culture might even be faced and mastered through acts of skillful interpretation. So despite the consistently "fractured" (126) and "destabilized" (181) masculinity they have witnessed on screen for the past 40 years, most of the critics writing here have apparently survived the moviegoing ritual intact, although in a number of essays the simple deictic identification of incoherent or conflicted masculinity is allowed as an end in itself. For example, Ken Page concludes that "the instability of contemporary masculinity is given expression and identity in *Taxi Driver* and *New York, New York* through De Niro's "bleak characterizations," (144) but he never really suggests a cause for this effect, a reason for the instability expressed (ironically) so coherently in the continued collaboration of a star and director. Panikos Panayi's potentially illuminating essay on *One Last Chance,* a BBC film set amidst the ultramacho Greek Cypriot community of London, finally concedes that "the film offers no solution to the problematic and destructive elements of such a masculinity," (152) and likewise neither does the essay. It's been some time since feminist critics found such straightforward declarations of oppressive representation satisfying conclusions rather than motivations for analysis.

The best essays in *You Tarzan* (Andy Medhurst on Dirk Bogarde and *The Spanish Gardener,* Ashwani Sharma on Bombay superstar Amitabh Bachchan, and Garry Whannel on *North Dallas Forty*) largely succeed by introducing neglected topics and then justifying their interest. Whannel especially demonstrates the value of another, historically contextualized look at a generally forgettable sports drama. The worst essays carelessly overgeneralize and offer plot summaries as self-evident critical commentary. (In fact, the entire collection is characterized by minimal attention to the formal, cinematic elements of the texts under analysis.) If, as John Newsinger confidently declares (before tediously summarizing well-known examples), "All war films are tales of masculinity," (126) then *Four Jills and a Jeep* and *Since You Went Away* are apparently not war films, with the boundaries of the genre guarded like the doors of a men's club. Tom Ryall carefully describes the different narrative components of the novel and three film versions of *The 39 Steps,* but his general explanation that their "differences may relate to the rather different historical contexts in which they were made" (164) exemplifies an all-too-frequent obviousness that binds the collection together. Even Richard Dyer's essay on Rock Hudson disappoints, coming from a versatile critic whose best work (on Judy Garland, for example) approaches the definitive. In light of Richard Meyer's pre-

vious essay on Hudson (in *Inside/Out,* edited by Diana Fuss) or, especially, Mark Rappaport's film-essay *Rock Hudson's Home Movies,* Dyer's observations appear redundant.

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The book *Media Spectacles* focuses on similar mediated wonders that occurred earlier in the 1990s. The scope of the essays in this edited collection remind the reader what a truly "spectacular" decade it has been so far: topics include Dan Quayle's criticism of Murphy Brown, President Bush's ill-fated trip to Japan, the controversy over *JFK*, and media discourse about Jeffrey Dahmer, among many others. The book divides these spectacles into four categories: politics (such as media coverage of Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas); borders (focusing on issues of racial and international borders); sex (the William Kennedy Smith trial); and AIDS (such as the media saga of Kimberly Bergalis).

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A golden light perhaps. With no nostalgia for the present evident, the bias is distinctly Golden Age. Golden too in that there is more on masters than journeymen, on masterpieces than genres. Given the presumed authenticity of the numerous autobiographies, the abundance of biographies and other nonfiction, and the journalistic keenness of many of the novels and short stories, a diligent reader would undoubtedly acquire a substantial, if somewhat antiquated, insight from a vantage never much farther afield than Beverly Hills or Malibu.

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Of these books published between 1915 and 1991 (Vachel Lindsay's *The Art of the Moving Picture* is the earliest), almost three-quarters appeared in just three decades, 1960–90. The Collectors chose seven times more nonfiction than fiction, the latter concentrated in 1930–60, and thus, unlike the bulk of the nonfiction, likely to have been read by the judges not at the time of publication but years, maybe decades later, when the status of "classic" had long since been conferred. Almost half the nonfiction testifies to the power of the individual to shape events artistic and otherwise. (Notably, it appears that the only way a woman's life will be told is if she tells it herself—five of 18 autobiographies on the list are about women; none of the 11 biographies is.) Almost all the fiction argues the opposite brief. Triumph and despair: these are Hollywood's most perdurable myths.

MITCH TUCHMAN

Lev, Peter. *The Euro-American Cinema.* Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1993. $27.50 cloth; $12.95 paper. Peter Lev has taken the American-European coproduction and put an interesting new spin on it. He sees film-making from the 1960s onward as essentially a global enterprise and cites examples from the recent

Overall, the chapters are short on explicit theory but long on insightful analysis. Especially thought-provoking are Elaine Scarry's essay on political participation and the Persian Gulf War, Jann Matlock's analysis of media coverage of the William Kennedy Smith trial, and Douglas Crimp's highly personal critique of discourse about Magic Johnson and HIV. Although the topical nature of *Media Spectacles* may limit its academic shelf life, reading the book while these particular spectacles are still relatively fresh is enjoyable and helps to illuminate other recent mediated phenomena.

MATTHEW P. MCALLISTER

Hays, Will, Jr. *Come Home with Me Now . . . The Untold Story of Movie Czar Will Hays by His Son.* Indianapolis: Guild Press, 1993. $22.95. Readers looking for a systematic defense of Will Hays' activities as Movie Czar will not find it here. The only section that deals with the matter (chapter 23) also contains the book's most memorable anecdote about Will Hays:

> Tom White (the chauffeur) told me that once when Tom was driving him to his New York apartment after an especially grueling day, Dad suddenly gusted, "'Cleavage,' 'cleavage,' I'm sick of fighting 'cleavage!' I'd like to wade through a forty-acre field of breasts!" But he laughed when Tom offered, "Say the word, General, and I'll join you."

One also finds stories about Will Rogers, Walt Disney, Johnny Weissmuller, Carole Lombard, negotiations over film rights with the Germans in 1930 and later with Mussolini ("Will Hays amounts to as much in Hollywood and in the moving picture game as Mussolini does in Italy," wrote the Western actor Bill James in 1932), but such passages by no means make up the bulk of the book, which has no index.

Nor is this the type of book that should have one. The rewards of *Come Home with Me Now* require a patient, cover-to-cover reader. Despite the subtitle, the book is not about Will Hays the Movie Czar but rather about Will Hays the often-absent father. Will Hays, Jr., novelist, screenplay writer, and former Mayor of Crawfordsville, Indiana, has written a memoir about a son's yearning to share more of his childhood and adolescence with his father, who was initially in Washington as Hoover's Postmaster General until 1922, then in Hollywood and above all in New York as President of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America.

The author's narrative technique, which works quite effectively, is to alternate chapters of his own memories with chapters made up entirely of documents, mostly his own letters to his father but also newspaper clippings, drawings, letters from family and friends, and tantalizing quotations from his father's diary. Will Hays emerges as a rather likable figure "with an aura of sadness about him," who seemed neither to worship nor revel in power, and who worked hard at being a good father. "I am engaged in this work because I think it ought to be done for the benefit of yourself and all the other boys that are around now and will be around in years to come," Will Hays wrote to his son in 1926.

HAMILTON H. H. BECK

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Refreshing as it is to see appraisal of the works of newer or largely neglected film-makers, the author spends an inordinate amount of space on some directors (Hal Hartley and Julie Dash), while giving what appears to be only perfunctory consideration to others (particularly the Coen brothers). Moreover, many of the author's opinions are so broadly stated as to be, at best, dubious: his assertion that "[Abel] Ferrara's art has finally, I think, no religious dimension" is absurd when one considers Ferrara's spiritually provocative *Bad Lieutenant*. Clashes of taste and outlook between writer and reader are to be expected in any critical study, but it is difficult to accept Lyons' often sweeping generalizations, lacking as they are in substantive textual backing.

S. C. B.

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GREGG RICKMAN

Ray, Nicholas, edited and introduced by Susan Ray. *I Was Interrupted: Nicholas Ray on Making Movies.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993. $25.00. "I don't believe in the rules of the game. I just don't believe there isn't an exception every time, somewheres." With these words, rebel director Nick Ray summed up his creative orientation and might also have been explaining his strained and ultimately severed relationship with studio film-making. A bad boy of legendary proportions, Ray directed, in his Hollywood years, such key 1950s films as *Rebel Without a Cause, Johnny Guitar, In a Lonely Place,* and *Bigger Than Life,* yet regarded himself as "the best damn filmmaker in the world, who has never made one entirely good, entirely satisfactory film."

As a testament to Ray's tempestuously creative life, his wife and chosen biographer, Susan Ray, has assembled this powerful, sometimes harrowing collection of Ray's letters, journal entries, notes, scribblings and, best of all, transcripts of classes he taught on acting and directing. These latter form the organizing skeleton of the book and reveal Ray as an exceptionally keen teacher, guided by an analytic mind sensitive to the nuances of gesture and movement and by an abiding respect for his students. Set around these transcripts are Ray's candid reflections on art, creativity, and his battles with drugs, drink, and, finally, cancer and approaching death.

As Susan Ray hoped, like "a phoenix from the fragments," a vivid portrait of Ray emerges from these pages and this material. This is a uniquely moving tribute which no one interested in Ray should miss. S. P.

Salwolke, Scott. *Nicolas Roeg Film by Film.* Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1993. $42.50. Salwolke offers detailed, scene-by-scene commentary on each of Roeg's films through *Cold Heaven*, laying his case for their director's claim to our attention in his patient explication of their mysteries. Jargon-free and intelligent: virtues Roeg's commentators don't always possess. G. R.

Simmon, Scott. *The Films of D. W. Griffith.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993. $44.95 cloth; $13.95 paper. The extremely brief format of the new Cambridge Film Classics series would be a challenge to any author, much less one assigned a film-maker as prolix as D. W. Griffith. Of the three books in this series I have read, Scott Simmon's does the best job of advancing an original thesis about a particular film-maker. Simmon accomplishes this by for all practical purposes ignoring the director's films after *Intolerance*—an audacious move made up for by his loving attention to many important short films of Griffith's Biograph period, both famous (*A Corner in Wheat*) and unknown (*The Painted Lady*).

Indeed, Simmon goes on record with his opinion that "Griffith's great work lies among his Biographs of 1908–13, not his later features," later narrowing his appreciation to the "great years" 1910 and 1911. Dividing his study into film-a-year looks at Griffith's contributions to the nascent genres of urban dramas, urban films, and art cinema, Simmon has stimulating things to say about director, genres, and era alike. His accomplishment is aided enormously by the tremendous amount of information from a huge variety of sources, most originally the journalism and other popular writing of the time.

A chapter on the theme of "family honor" in *The Birth of a Nation* and its precursors briefly discusses the infamous scene of the "renegade Negro" Gus's chase of "Little Sister" to her death and is exemplary in on the one hand dismissing the persistent tale that Griffith shot a rape for the scene and on the other hand gently debunking modern defenders of the film who ingeniously attempt to mitigate the film's more noisome qualities.

Simmon displays a light touch with all of his learning, compiling a readable text that is sometimes even too light: assertions of Griffith's "psychopathology" go unproven, and (unsurprisingly) many observations aren't explored as thoroughly as one might like. Simmon makes up for this with minute observations of the nuances of, say, Lillian Gish's performance in *The Mothering Heart* on one page, coupled with citations from women's novels of the period and feminist theory on the next. Now if only someone would persuade Simmon to write two or three hundred pages more on Griffith's features after 1916, the result might well be definitive.

G. R.

Sperling, Cass Warner, and Cork Millner, with Jack Warner, Jr. *Hollywood Be Thy Name.* Rocklin, CA: Prima Publishing, 1993. $24.95. Part family history and part industrial history, this book follows the fortunes of the Warner brothers (and Warner Bros.) from their origins in Poland through the departure in 1969 of the last Warner—Jack—from what had been his family's film studio. Cass Warner Sperling, the granddaughter of eldest brother Harry Warner, draws on family letters and stories, interviews with relatives and Warner business associates, and Hollywood legends in her effort to pay

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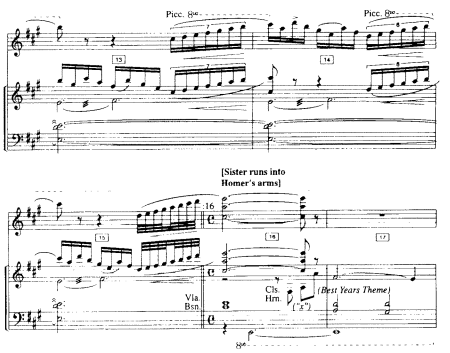

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Alex North (courtesy of Anna North)

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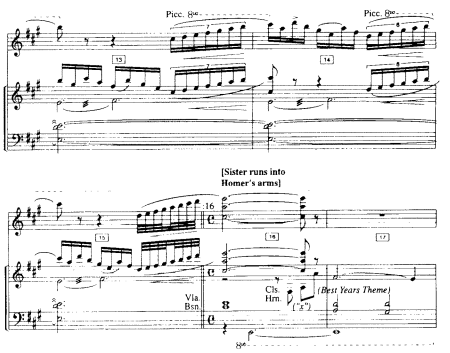

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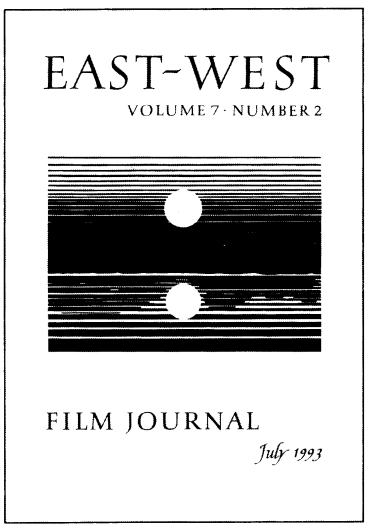

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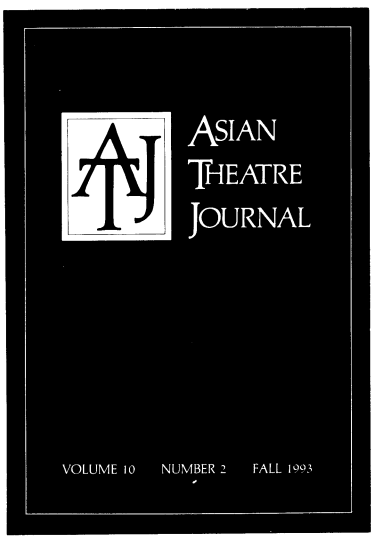

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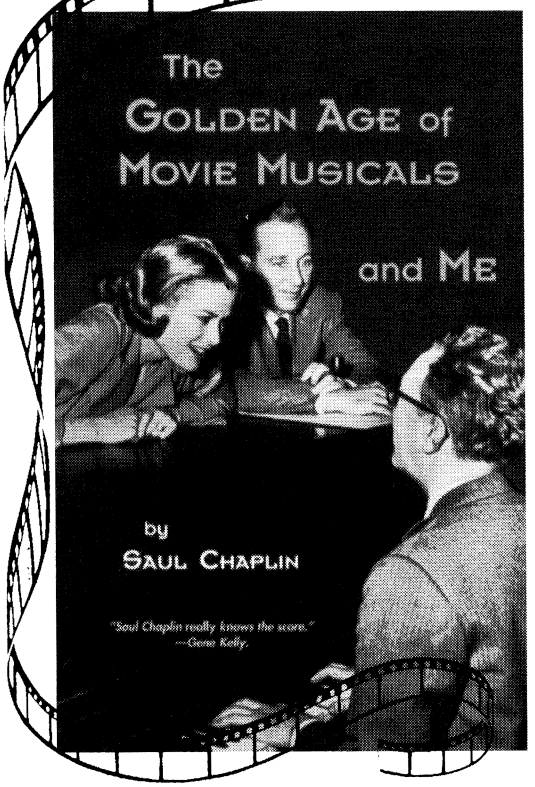

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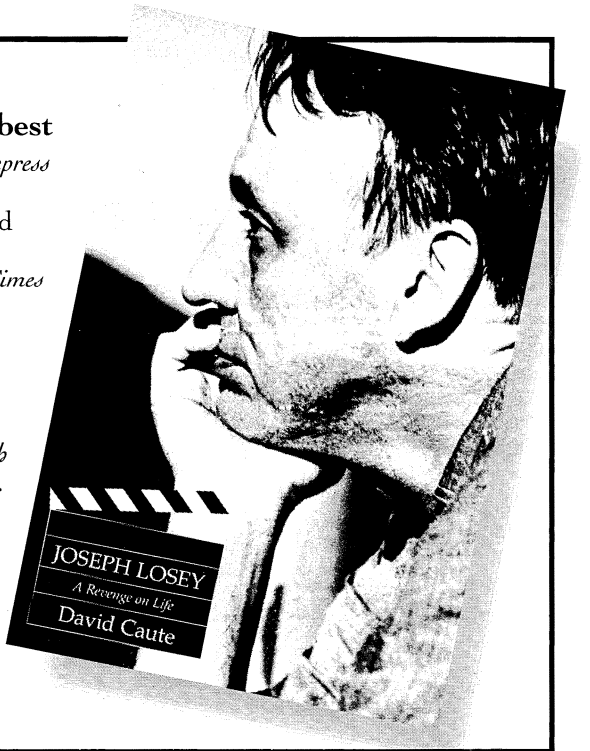

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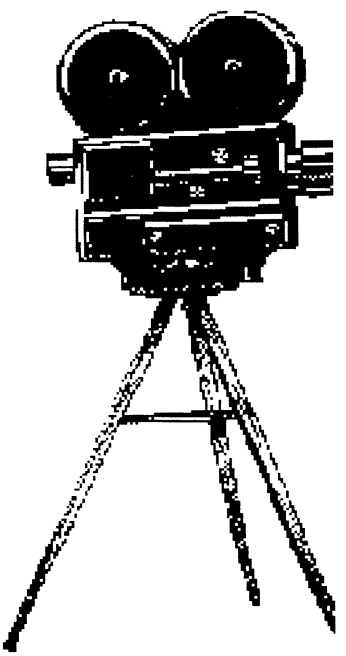

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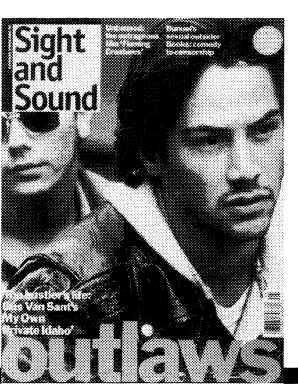

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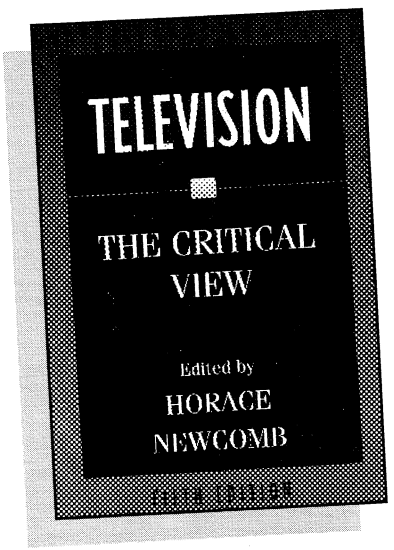

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